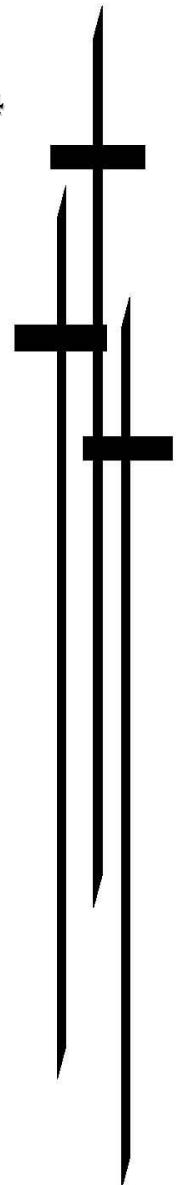


The Pillar

The

Brecksville United Church of Christ

December 2014



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



...What about Advent?

Over the past several years, and quite likely this year, a segment of the news media will fuss and fume about "The War on Christmas". While I understand being annoyed at the crass commercialism that surrounds the celebration of Jesus' birth, technically this isn't a "war" on

Christmas. It's an all-out attack against Advent! Retailers really don't care what you or I do on December 25th, as long as we've spent big bucks between Halloween and that last minute Christmas Eve run to the store. And whether we get a "Merry Christmas" greeting from Macy's or a "Happy Holiday" hello from Home Depot, will make absolutely no difference in how we choose to commemorate Christ birth. So if we're really concerned about "Keeping Christ in Christmas" perhaps the first thing we need to do, is practice "keeping" Advent in our daily routine.

Advent means "arrival" or "the coming". Traditionally, it's the four-week period when Christians prepare for Christ's coming - both as a humble baby in a manger, *and* as the Holy One who ushers-in the culmination of the Divine Realm of Love and Grace. Therefore Advent is an excellent time to reflect on our lives from beginning to end, and to contemplate on what truly matters in Life. We do live in a society where materialism often rules. And as our society pounds us with the message

that Christmas is about *stuff* (preferably big and expensive stuff - and lots of it), it shouldn't be surprising that our ability to focus on the genuine meaning of Christmas can become impaired.

This is why I believe it's a good and healthy practice for us to actively observe and engage in the Season of Advent. By focusing on the Advent Season in our homes and in our Church Home, we can filter-out some of that early and 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, appreciate, and share that precious gift. A couple things that we can do, as individuals or as families, is to delve into our wonderful BUCC Advent Devotional Book. These daily reflections from our members are brief, yet 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 pray that each of us will take advantage of the many good things offered here throughout this Holy Season; and that our holidays may be filled with Holy Days of Peace, Joy and Love!

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.

HERE WE COME A'CAROLING!

On Sunday, December 14th at 2:00 pm, our youth and adults will meet at the church to go caroling to our shut-in 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.

CHRISTMAS MORNING WORSHIP OPPORTUNITY!

The Community of St. Bridget, the group that worships here on Saturdays at 5 pm, will be celebrating Christmas with a service in our Sanctuary at 10 am. All BUCC members and friends are welcome to join them. St. Bridget's is a progressive and inclusive Family of Faith, who - like our family - extend Christ's welcome to the Communion Table to all who are present. Our own Kate Klonowski's mom, Ann, will be leading the worship service.





FROM THE MINISTRIES OF BUCC

FACILITIES

FACILITIES MINISTRY would like to thank the brave crew who



came out on a cold, windy Saturday to rake and blow leaves to the curb. Thank you to Ed Lusk, Eric Rahnenfuehrer, Jesse Wade, Joe Began, and the always- there- to- help, Wes Novak. Your help was very much appreciated.

NEWS FROM OCWM

The Christmas Fund will be received at the December 21st worship service. Also the offering at the Christmas Eve service will be devoted to the Christmas Fund. The funds are used to supplement monthly pensions for lower-income retired UCC clergy and lay employees. Such needs as food, utilities, and living and medical expenses are included. Also quarterly health premium supplementation, especially for prescription

medications, is included. Emergency grants are provided when needed, and also "thank you" gift checks for these Veterans Of The Cross are given as a special gift as a reminder that they have not been forgotten.

The next hunger meal is scheduled for Sunday, December 21st at Pearl Road United Methodist Church. We will be

partnering with members and friends of the Saint Bridget community (also known to us as Kate Klonowski's mom and her friends and associates). The menu will be decided about two weeks after this is written, and the sign-up board will appear in the narthex with full information. We are anticipating that about 150 meals will be served.

We are happy to report that the food donations are appearing in larger and larger quantities. Last month, 45 bags and boxes of food, 1 bag of dental supplies, three bags of toiletries, and two bags of hats and mittens from the mitten tree were delivered to Brookside Hunger Center. Needless to say, they were delighted to receive these items. Thank you to all who have contributed.

The magic mitten tree in the narthex has begun to fill up. The delivery mentioned above was the first of about three "fill-ups" that will be delivered to hunger centers. There is also a need for blankets.

The aluminum can barrel magically continues to fill. In October, another 105 pounds of cans and other metals were redeemed, yielding \$34.00. And there is another shipment just about ready to go. To date, almost 3700 pounds (!) have been redeemed, yielding just over \$1600.00 for SARA.

One last item. You will see flyers posted on bulletin boards here and there around the church building, pointing out Brookside's request for holiday gift items for less fortunate families. Please respond as you are able.

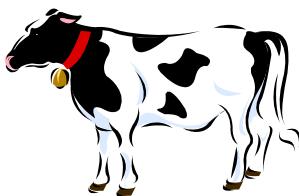
OCWM & CHRISTIAN ED

OCWM and Christian Ed are teaming up again this year with Heifer International (www.heifer.org) to offer you a last-minute shopping extravaganza on Sunday, December 21st during

coffee hour after the pageant/church services. Nothing says "I love you and wish you a Merry Christmas" like a cow! Don't worry, you won't need to wrap it and fit it in the trunk of your Toyota Prius...the animals and other awesomely

sustainable gifts are delivered for you to families in need around the world! It's definitely the gift that keeps on giving.

If you'd like to make an order but are unable to join us on the 21st, please contact Kate Klonowski at keightykay@gmail.com or call/text at 216-534-3498.



NOTES AND ASIDES



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

December 4: Jon Thompson

Doug Fawcett

December 6: Kevin Smith

Jacob VanDuyne

December 12: Betty Einhart

December 13: Grace Hunt

Michael VanDuyne

December 14: Chase Hoppel

December 17: Shannon West

December 19:	David Durkit
December 20:	Genny Constanzo
	Naomi Klonowski
	Jim Duffy
	Jill Black
December 21:	Bob Chandler
	Lauren Haynes
December 25:	Linda Kriynovich
	Jesus
December 28:	Dan Stewart
	Valerie Duffy
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!

FLOWER MINISTRY

Flowers are placed in the front of the church each Sunday to honor/celebrate your family/friends/events. We need your help in getting this information to our office manager, Jeannette, before she prepares the Bulletin on Thursdays. It's easy as 1-2-3.....



1. Put your name on the chart hanging on the west wall just inside the door to the narthex.
2. Fill out the information form found in the pocket below the chart.
3. Turn this information form in to Joy Garapic.

The flower ministry does not want to miss sharing your joy by not having the correct information.

Our ministry is small in numbers and welcomes new members anytime. You don't have to be a florist, an artist or anyone special to come up with an arrangement or just a vase of colorful flowers. All ideas are worth exploring. If interested, please contact me at coffee hour, calling 330-467-9357 or jrenovetz@gmail.com. Thank you, Jan Renovetz

FOOD PANTRY



January - Canned Fruit & Vegetables

MUSIC

This year's Christmas cantata is scheduled for Sunday December 14 at our regular morning worship. *Infant Holy,*



Infant Lowly will be presented by the adult choir with assistance from several seasonal choir members, instrumentalists and narrators. The cantata features pieces by Bach, Shaw, Herms, Schalk, Johnson and Smith, as well as music from Poland, Japan, Finland and Puerto Rico. We hope you can join us for this wonderful BUCC tradition.

POINSETTIA CARE



Please, remember to sign up to help decorate the Sanctuary with Poinsettias. There is an order form on the last page of *The Pillar*.

Here are some tips to enjoy your Poinsettia for a whole year!

When You First Bring Your Poinsettia Home

Light - Place it near a sunny window. South, east or west facing windows are preferable to a north facing window. Poinsettias are tropicals and will appreciate as much direct sunlight as you can provide.

Heat - To keep the poinsettia in bloom as long as possible, maintain a temperature of 65 - 75 degrees F. during the day. Dropping the temperature to about 60 degrees F. at night will not hurt the plant. However, cold drafts or allowing the leaves to touch a cold window can injure the leaves and cause premature leaf drop. If you've ever see a gangly poinsettia in bloom, with only a couple of sad looking leaves hanging on, it was probably exposed to temperatures that were too cool or extreme shifts in temperature.

Water - Water the plant whenever the surface feels dry to the touch. Water until it drains out the bottom, but don't let the plant sit in water. Wilting is another common cause of leaf drop. A wilted plant can be revived and salvaged, but it will take another season to improve its appearance.

Humidity - Lack of humidity during dry seasons, in particular winter, is an ongoing houseplant problem. If your home tends to be dry and your poinsettia is in direct light, you will find yourself watering frequently, possibly every day.

After Christmas Care

January - March: Keep watering the poinsettia whenever the surface is dry.

April: Starting April 1st, gradually decrease water, allowing them to get dry between waterings. Be careful the stem does not begin to shrivel. This is a sign the plant is too stressed and is dying. In a week or two, when the plant has acclimated to this drying process, move it to a cool spot like the basement or a heated garage. You want to keep it at about 60 degrees F.

May: In mid-May, cut the stems back to about 4 inches and repot in a slightly larger container, with new potting soil. Water it well. Place the newly potted plant back into the brightest window you have and once again keep it at a temperature of 65 - 75 degrees F. Continue watering whenever the surface of the soil feels dry.



Watch for new growth. Once new growth appears, begin fertilizing every two weeks with a complete fertilizer. Follow fertilizer label recommendations.

June: Move the poinsettia outside, pot and all. Keep it in a partially shaded location and maintain your watering and fertilizing schedule.

July: In early July, pinch back each stem by about one inch. This is to encourage a stout, well branched plant. If left unpinched, the poinsettia will grow tall and spindly.

August: By mid-August, the stems should have branched and leafed out. Once again, pinch or cut the new stems, leaving 3-4 leaves on each shoot. Bring the plant back indoors and back into your brightest window. Continue watering and fertilizing.

September: Continue regular watering and fertilizing. Make sure the temperature stays above 65 degrees F.

October: Poinsettias are short-day plants, meaning their bud set is affected by the length of daylight. To re-bloom, poinsettias need about 10 weeks with 12 hours or less of sunlight per day. You will have to artificially create these conditions and it's crucial that you be diligent.

Beginning October 1st, keep your plant in complete darkness from 5 pm to 8 am. Any exposure to light will delay blooming. Use an opaque box or material to block out light. Many people place their plants in a closest, but if light gets in through the cracks or if you open and use the closet, it will affect the bud set.

Move the plant back to the sunny window during the daytime and continue watering and fertilizing.

November: Around the last week of November, you can stop the darkness treatment and allow the plant to remain in the window. You should see flower buds at this point

December - Stop fertilizing about December 15th. Keep watering and treat your plant the way you did when you first brought it home in bloom. If all has gone well, it should be back in bloom and ready to begin the process all over again.



ENCORE

Talents Too Good to Waste! (Text - Matthew 25:14-30)

Pastor Dave Shackle
November 16, 2014

While we generally use the word “talent” to refer to someone’s ability,

in Jesus’ parable that word refers to a phenomenal sum of money. Back then, a “talent” was a measure of weight - approximately 100 pounds. So each “talent” that these servants receive, is most likely 100 pounds of pure silver or gold! Talk about a generous boss! I don’t know about you, but if I suddenly had 100 pounds of precious metal to invest or spend, I’d be doing cartwheels! (Though these days, I might have to hire someone to do the cartwheels for me - but I could afford it!) The point is, this master provides an enormous amount of wealth for his servants to use as they see fit. The only thing he cares about upon his return, is that they’ve done something worthwhile with it - that they’ve taken advantage of the tremendous resources that have been placed into their hands.

The reason Jesus tells this parable, is to help you and me realize the mind-blowing generosity of our Divine, Creative Source; and to think about our response to that remarkable generosity. It’s a story to help us recognize that each one of us has been given a tremendous treasure - the precious gift of Life itself! And just as a treasure is given to each servant so that they can make the most of it, our lives have been given to us so that we might live them to the fullest - that we might delight in the fantastic opportunities which are ours to

experience, and to share. Of course, this parable also reminds us of some of the pitfalls that can hinder, or ruin, our living full and meaningful lives.

The fundamental mistake of that third servant, is his failure to grasp the fact that this great treasure is his to use however he sees fit. Therefore rather than using it, or even *misusing* it, he simply buries it in the ground and walks away. He is afraid to take any risks or any action, and therefore misses-out on all the marvelous possibilities that are his to experience and enjoy. And while it might be easy to fault him for his basic cowardice, I'm certainly in no position to cast that first stone. When I think about my own life, I realize that the one thing that most often keeps me from living fully, freely, and joyfully, is basic *fear*. Therefore, my first step toward genuine purpose, fulfillment, and happiness, must be a step of basic *faith*. I must trust that *whatever* I do, Divine Love will sustain me, and Divine Grace will ultimately see me through my failures and my successes. For example, it wasn't until I truly trusted that God made me, loved me, and embraced me just as I am, that I could finally risk being honest with myself and others about being gay. I realized that in order to live my life fully and authentically, I couldn't be afraid to accept the uniquely peculiar gift of who I was. I had to respect it, treasure it, nurture it, and make the most of it.

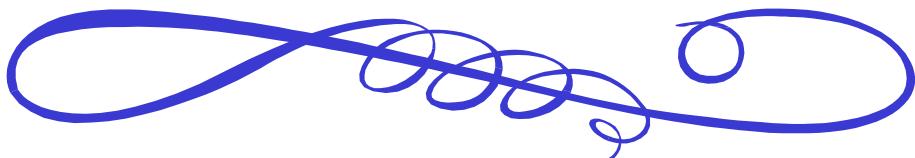
As long as I kept my true self buried away and hidden from the light of day, I remained captive to my fears - unable to completely connect with others, for fear of rejection; unable to draw closer to God, for fear of judgment. Yet when I finally realized - that for better or worse - God gave me this particular life to *live*, I felt a tremendous sense of freedom, and an amazing spirit of peace and wholeness. And in time, I was able to forge new and better relationships with most of the people in my life - relationships based on honesty, openness

and genuine love, rather than some false perception of who I really was, and the paralyzing fear of being found-out and rejected.

I think our fears keep a lot of us just as bound and paralyzed as that third servant in Jesus' story. It can be the fear of somehow displeasing God, or disappointing others; the fear of not measuring-up, or even the fear of success! If we do poorly, others might not approve. If we do exceptionally well, others may expect a lot more from us. (That can be scary as well!) But if we keep a low profile and do nothing at all, what harm can come of that?...except when we realize that we've missed-out on so much that Life has to offer, and we end up "weeping and gnashing our teeth." It's not because God punishes us, but because we ourselves deeply regret having lived our lives in that outer darkness our fears, rather than walking in the Light of Divine love and grace, joy and wholeness.

It seems kind of strange, that this third servant acknowledges that he *knew* his master had a passion for Life and adventure, risk-taking and creative investing; yet he himself does nothing to emulate that lifestyle. It's kind of like people who say they believe in a God of love and grace, yet fail to live their lives in a loving and gracious manner. It's like we Christians who claim the name of the Risen Christ, yet remain trapped in tightly shut tombs of our own making. I suppose the question we should ask ourselves is this: Do we truly trust that our Creative Source gives us this wonderful gift of Life so that we might live it to the fullest, or do we really think that by playing it safe and sitting on the sidelines we make God happy, or can find true happiness for ourselves? I suspect we all know the answer. So perhaps the better question is this: "What in the world are we waiting for?"

This tremendous treasure, these bountiful blessings of Life are ours to use, to nurture, to celebrate, *and* to share! And today is a great day to let go of our fears, and take hold of our faith; to marvel at, and make the most of all our amazing talents and gifts! Living our lives to the fullest is not a selfish thing to do. What matters, is that we use our blessings in ways that are creative and positive, generous and gracious. Each of us here today has been blessed in so many ways! And while our Divine Creator delights in blessing us all, God's true delight is in seeing us all use our blessings to *be* a blessing in the lives of one another. I don't know if God does cartwheels when this happens, but I do believe that God is quite pleased!



BUCC CALENDAR NOVEMBER 2014

Monday, Dec. 1**Tues, Dec. 2**

7 pm Membership

Wednesday, Dec. 3

6 am Early Birds

7-9 pm Optional Cantata
Rehearsal**Thursday, Dec. 4**

1 pm Bible Study

5:30 pm Pageant Music

7 pm Seasonal Choir

8:30 pm Choir

Friday Dec. 5**Saturday, Dec. 6**

9 am Facilities

10 am Confirmation

Sunday, Dec. 710 am Worship and
Church School

11 am Coffee Hour

5-6 pm Cantata Percuss
Rehearsal**Monday, Dec. 8****Tuesday, Dec. 9****Wednesday, Dec. 10**

6 am Early Birds

7 pm Council

Thursday, Dec. 11

1 pm Bible Study

5:30 pm Pageant Music

7-9 pm Cantata

Rehearsal

Friday, Dec. 12**Saturday, Dec. 13**

10 am Cantata

Rehearsal

12 pm Cantata at
Chippewa Place**Sunday, Dec. 14**10 am Worship &
Cantata

11 am Coffee Hour

2 pm Caroling/Youth
Ministry**Monday, Dec. 15****PILLAR DEADLINE****Tuesday, Dec. 16****Wednesday, Dec. 17**

6 am Early Birds

Thursday, Dec. 18

1 pm Bible Study

5:30 pm Pageant
Rehearsal**Friday, Dec. 19****Saturday, Dec. 20****Sunday, Dec. 21**

10 am Worship/Youth

Musical

11 am Coffee Hour

Hunger Meal PRUMC**Monday, Dec. 22****Tuesday, Dec. 23****Wednesday, Dec. 24**

6 am Early Birds

9 am Choir Rehearsal

10 pm Candlelight
Communion
Service**Thursday, Dec. 25**

10 am Worship led by

Ann Klonowski

Friday, Dec. 26**Saturday, Dec. 27****Sunday, Dec. 28**10 am Worship and
Church School

11 am Coffee Hour

Monday, Dec. 29**Tuesday, Dec. 30****Wednesday, Dec. 31**

6 am Early Birds

Participants in Worship

December 7, 2014

Lay Reader: Jon Thompson
 Head Usher: Anne Melfo
 Ushers: Cliff & Jane Cribbs
 Linda Kriyovich, Fred Pesek
 Acolyte: Briana Brown
 Peace Cndl: Lucy Brown
 Sound: Kevin Smith
 Commons Grtr: Marge Culver
 Narthex Grtr: Joanne Cook
 Flowers: Jan Renovetz
 Nursery: Marla Corrado
 Counters: Nancy Stella, Jim Duffy
 Server: Carole Snider Robin Coyer-Westerberg
 Clean Up: Gerge Snider, Jill Zedan
 Snacks: Sue Maier, Diane Gressley

December 14, 2014

Lay Reader: Jim Duffy
 Head Usher: Jan Renovetz
 Ushers: Chad & Bridget Sproul
 Tina Ortiz, Ed Lusk
 Acolyte: Amy Coyer-Westerberg
 Peace Cndl: Carrie Coyer-Westerberg
 Sound: Mike Westerberg
 Commons Grtr: George Snider
 Narthex Grtr: Carole Snider
 Flowers: Poinsettias
 Nursery: Gina or Jon Cook
 Counters : Dassie Matsuoka, Donn Whyte
 Servers: Sue Stenzel, Dottie Farwell
 Clean-Up: David & Kathy Pastor
 Snacks: Membership

DECEMBER 21, 2014

Lay Reader: Evie Novak
 Head Usher: Jill Zedan
 Ushers: Jon Thompson, Wes Novak
 Kate Klonowski, Matt Wolbert
 Acolyte: Ryan Stewart
 Peace Cndl: Drew Demko
 Sound: David Pastor
 Commons Grtr: Ann Kelly
 Narthex Grtr: Chad Sproul
 Flowers: Poinsettias
 Nursery: Kathy Pastor
 Counters: Bruce McCain, Anna Mary Fisher

(CONTINUED NEXT COLUMN)

Servers: Marge Culver, Dottie Farwell
 Clean-Up: Pat Bailey, Bridget Sproul
 Snacks: Christian Education

DECEMBER 24, 2014

Lay Reader: Bridget Sproul
 Head Usher: Bob Chandler
 Ushers: Heidi Spangler, Jim Duffy
 Val Duffy, Dave Bernard
 Comms Grtr: Jon Thompson
 Sound: Max Roha
 Counters: Jan Renovetz, Carole Snider

DECEMBER 28, 2014

Lay Reader: Sue Stenzel
 Head Usher: Diane Gressley
 Ushers: Drew Wilson, Lindsey Maier
 Kathy & David Pastor
 Ben Davis
 Acolyte: Garrett Demko
 Peace Candle: Doug Fawcett
 Sound: Bridget Sproul
 Commons Grtr: Narthex Grtr: Lenore Harris
 Flowers: Peg Duffy
 Nursery: Mac Hoppel
 Counters: Caroline Chandler, Joy Garapic
 Servers: Anne Melfo Doug Fawcett &
 Family, Jan Renovetz
 Clean-Up: Kathleen Stewart, Tina Ortiz
 Snacks:

CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH POINSETTIAS IN OUR SANCTUARY



Your Donation will buy plants which will be shared after Easter with those who are ill or shut-in, or have recently lost a loved one. Please fill out the form at the bottom of this page, and turn it in to the Church Office by:

DEADLINE – SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7

I Enclose \$10.00 _____ or other _____ for Poinsettias

***In Memory _____ or
Honor _____ or _____***

Of _____

Your Name

I will help Deliver Plants to shut-ins _____

*****PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KEEP YOUR
POINSETTIA OR LEAVE IT HERE FOR SHUT-INS AND OTHERS*****

WILL KEEP _____

WILL NOT KEEP _____

The Pillar

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Brecksville

United Church of Christ

**23 Public Square
Brecksville, Ohio 44141**

Moderator: Betsey Wilson
Betseywilson10@gmail.com

Phone: 440-526-4364
E-mail: buccoh@sbcglobal.net
Web: www.BrecksvilleUCC.org

Pastor: Rev. Dave Shackle
440-546-1193
buccpastor@sbcglobal.net

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Director of Music:
Dave Debick
buccmusic@sbcglobal.net

Financial Secretary: Joy Garapic
buccfinance@sbcglobal.net

Pillar Editor: Jeannette Kroeger
buccoh@sbcglobal.net

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FIRST CLASS