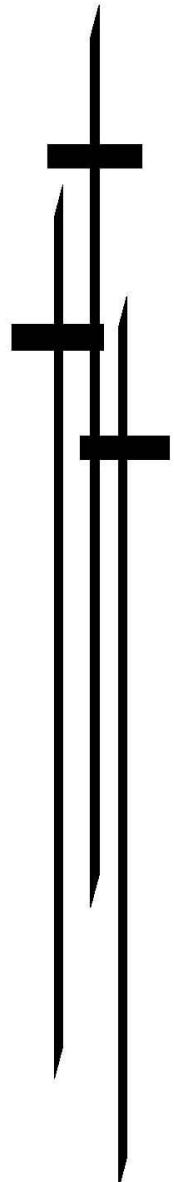


The *Pillar*

Brecksville United Church of Christ

JANUARY 2015



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



PASTOR'S
PONDERINGS . . .

...What's in Your Future...?

One of the simple ways I amuse my simple self while waiting in long holiday check-out lines, is by checking-out the various tabloid magazine's predictions for the

coming year. The uncanny insights gleaned from these publications are absolutely fantastic, though a bit confusing. [Should we really be worried that Brad and Angelina are going to break-up in 2015, or does the giant asteroid that's going to break-up the earth make it irrelevant?] Not surprisingly, the doom-and-gloom forecasts for this coming year are exceptionally bleak; though I'll admit that it's difficult to rate the degree of impending disaster from year to year. The publishers of these rag-mags clearly realize that the more bleak the projected disasters, the more bountiful the prospective dollars from their sales!

Fortunately, I know a highly effective antidote for these kind of forecasts of foreboding calamities. In fact, yesterday received a couple strong doses of it, and plan to continue a

therapeutic course of ongoing treatments. I'm writing this article the day after our BUCC Christmas Cantata - an awesome and inspiring presentation of the Christmas message. Dave Debick performed his magnificent magic in crafting the music and drawing -out the finest talents of our singers and instrumentalists. And Jim Duffy helped weave together a beautiful narration, using writings from our own BUCC Advent/Christmas Devotional Book. It was phenomenal!

That afternoon, I went Christmas Caroling some of our youth, adults, and children, to share more of that joy with of our home-bound members. Now, I eagerly await our upcoming Sunday School Pageant, and the joyful message of Good News it will surely bring. Then there will be our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, and our continuing celebration of God's Gift of Love during the 12 days of Christmas, into the Epiphany Season, and throughout the entire year!

So even though some truly bad news may rock our world, and our own lives, it is truly important that you and I don't lose sight of the tremendous amount of Good News and goodwill that surrounds us each day. And if we really want to contemplate a vision of what the future might hold, perhaps good place to look is in the far-distant past. The Prophet Isaiah, in the midst of great turmoil and danger, envisions a remarkably promising future of peace and universal harmony. It's a time when "the lion will lie down with the lamb...and a little child shall lead them." This ancient vision is one that you and I can also foresee, whenever we look into the hopeful eyes of a child of God,

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and remember the hope-filled message of ***The*** Child of God! And as God's children of all ages, you and I can also reflect that hope and peace, whenever we give thanks to God - by giving our support and care to those around us.

Therefore, the next time you experience difficulty, pain, or loss - or hear dire predictions of worse times yet to come - try to remember, that in all times and places, Our Loving, Creative Source is with us. And the Holy One who calls us into being, and breathes into us the Spirit of Life, promises to keep us safe and secure.

Peace and Joy!

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, 26 bags and boxes of food, 2 bags of toiletries, 1 bag of dental supplies, some coats, and the second crop of hats, mittens, and scarves from the mitten tree were delivered to Community Corner. The items were valued at \$650.00, but the

real value to the recipients is far beyond that.

The aluminum can barrel continues to work its magic. However, there seems to be some confusion by what is meant by "aluminum" cans. From time to time, steel cans ("tin cans") appear in the barrel.

Unfortunately, the steel cans are not redeemable as are the aluminum cans. Therefore, we respectfully request that only aluminum cans be put into the barrel.

NOTES AND ASIDES

FOOD PANTRY



January - Canned Fruit & Vegetables



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

January 5:	Cassy Martinez
January 9:	Dylan Rees
January 12:	Zachary Kolar
January 18:	Jan Renovetz
January 24:	Jim Pay

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January 30: Jonathan Cook
January 31: Cliff Cribbs

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

LETTER OF THANKS

Dear BUCC Family:

What a wonderful surprise during coffee hour on Sunday the 14th to receive a most generous gift card from you. My work here has kept me busy and out of the malls. Now you force me to go out and shop!

It is gratifying to see members keeping up with their pledges. Every year at this time the budget process begins. It is important to know what money the church can expect to receive in order to plan for fixed expenses and committee requests.

 My sincere thanks for your generosity and your trust in me.

Joy Garapic

WOMEN UNITED



Women United is meeting Wednesday, Jan 21, 2015, at 11 a.m. in the Parlor of the church. Our guest

speaker will be Rob Grow. Rob is a hospital chaplain in Akron, Ohio. He will be speaking about his experiences as a hospital chaplain and gun issues. Bring a sandwich or a lunch with you.



ENCORE

**His Bark is Worse Than His
Bite**

[Texts -Isaiah 40:1-11; Mark 1:1-8]

Pastor Dave Shackle

December 7, 2014

When some people reflect on John the Baptist's mission to "Prepare the way of the Lord," they envision technique being similar to that of a bull in a china shop, or a bulldozer on steroids! If every valley needs to be raised-up and every mountain and hill made low, then it's going to take some brute force and high powered punch to get the job done. And who better than John the Baptist to provide the muscle? John's hard-hitting message, is one of *repentance*; and for some Christians, that word carries a run-'em-over, knock-'em-down kind of quality. "Repent or Perish" / "Turn or Burn" / "Convert

to Christ or be devoured by the devil!" That's how some people expect a prophetic message to sound - a word of woeful judgment and impending devastation. I suppose that's why the term "prophet of doom" is far more familiar than the term "prophet of hope!" And that's why this image of John the Baptist "Preparing the Way of the Lord" in a fierce and fiery manner seems credible to people today, and why many preachers still to perpetuate that sharp-edged fear-driven approach.

There are those, who "in the name of the Lord" actually seem to relish running roughshod over people, and putting-down anyone who stands in their way.

"You're not a Christian? Then you're going to hell."

"You say you are a Christian, but haven't been immersed in believer's baptism? Then you are destined for damnation!"

"You're gay and you want to serve God? Then you better straighten-up, sister, or get ready to get run-over! And you don't believe in my Biblical interpretation of how God works and who God accepts, then prepare to be pulverized, because I'm preparing the Way of the Lord!"

The primary problem with that kind of brutal approach to "Clearing the Way for Christ" is that those who employ such tactics actually end up hindering the very thing they claim to promote. Even though John the Baptist and many of the prophets of old declare a decisive message of *repentance*, they never declare that it's God's intention to knock-down or annihilate those who are already battered or

beaten. Now, the prophets do have some scathing words for those who are self-righteously judgmental; as well as for those who use their power or position to attack, abuse, or take advantage of others. But a genuine Prophet of God - first and foremost - seeks justice, shows mercy, and stands with those vulnerable people who need help and support.

By all accounts, John the Baptist was a formidable and fiery figure. With that diet of locusts and wild honey, and that camel hair coat-thing he had going, he probably did seem a bit barbaric! Yet even rough and rugged John didn't go out of his way to attack people with his message of repentance. To the contrary, people actually came looking for him. All kinds of people - from the Judean countryside, to the city of Jerusalem - were drawn to this impressive and imposing prophet. They went into the wilderness to receive from John a baptismal cleansing, and to soak-in his message of repentance and forgiveness, redemption and *hope!* The way that John "Prepares the Way of the Lord" is by calling all those who need to, to turn-away from their unhealthy and destructive way of living. And then, he points them toward the Salvation of God - God's saving Presence which is found in the person of Jesus Christ. John certainly didn't want himself, or his methods, to become an obstacle to those seeking the Christ. So at the opportune moment, he humbly steps aside, so that people can have clear access the Christ who now stands among them. John is not a bully, or a bull in a china shop - tossing the "bad" people out of Christ's way. He is an inspiring and encouraging guide, who

invites all people to prepare their hearts and lives for Christ's gracious and loving Presence.

Jesus Christ, this Messiah to whom John points, is one who will turn this world's understanding of power and greatness completely upside-down. As the Christ - as God's Anointed One - Jesus establishes his Lordship, by humbly serving other people. He lifts-up the lowly and champions the oppressed; he touches society's "untouchable" lepers, with compassion and wholeness; he even is willing to wash the feet of his followers - including those who will betray, deny, and desert him. And when presented with the opportunity to back-off from his inclusive message of grace, and save his own skin, Jesus chooses to stand in solidarity with us sinners - Trusting that his Divine, Life-giving Source will honor that choice, and transform his death into a gateway to new and everlasting life. *This is "The Way of the Lord!"* And it's the same pathway to full and meaningful life which you and I are now called to follow.

In order for us to do so, repentance may well be needed - not only by those whose lives are obviously on the wrong track, but also by those who think it's O.K. to bully others with their oppressive religious rules. The call to *repent* - to make a radical change in the way we approach Life - is still an extremely viable message, regardless of how that word has been misused as a Biblical battering ram. To *re-pent* literally means to "turn again" - to change our direction, whenever we recognize that our behaviors, our priorities, or our lives are off-target from that which is good and true and wholesome.

Therefore, repentance can be a truly liberating and Life-enhancing experience!

For example, if you or I find that our relationships are damaged, dysfunctional, or destructive, then we should *want* to repent - to somehow turn those relationships around. If our faith is floundering and lifeless, yet we want it to be passionate and alive, then repentance is clearly in order. However, just as it's important that we don't let others beat us down with a heavy-handed call to "repent", it's equally important that we don't beat ourselves-up in our own efforts to repent and to change. The call to repentance *can* have a sharp and urgent tone; but it should also be tempered with a spirit of genuine grace and compassion.

The process of repentance offers us a fresh start in the way we live, the way we love, the way we relate to God and to one another. And though the way of repentance is not an easy one, it's certainly a worthwhile path to pursue. It is a journey that is essentially traveled by *faith* - by trusting that our Divine Creative Source truly does love us, and wants us to do well in our lives. Now, "doing well" doesn't mean that we will have great riches, or power, or fame. It means that we will *do* well - by helping those in need, by standing-up for the underdog, and by treating every person we meet with fairness, kindness, and compassion.

Today, you and I, like John the Baptist, have the fantastic opportunity to help "Prepare the Way of the Lord" - not by running people over, but by lifting them up and encouraging them to also do well in *their* lives. And perhaps the

best and easiest way you and I can do this, is by showing them the Divine Love and Grace that we ourselves have already experienced, and joyfully inviting them to share it with us. To check-out our Church! To experience this warm and welcoming community of faith. To come and join us on this remarkable journey of repentance and forgiveness, hope and love.



2014 POINSETTIA DEDICATIONS

Anonymous

In Memory of the Lost but Not Forgotten.

Julie Bernard &
Linda Kriynovich

In Memory of Tony, Julie & Lori Gorenc.

Bob & Caroline

In Memory of Lucille Collison, Ruth Rice & others

Chandler

Gone But Not Forgotten.

Joanne Cook

In Memory of my Husband Skip, Parents, and Twin Sister Jeanne.

Jane & Cliff
Cribbs

In Memory of Loved Ones.

Jeanne Cowden

In Memory of Husband, Jim.

Marjorie Culver *In Memory of my Husband Dick, and Brothers-in-Law Ron & Carlton.*

Jim & Peg Duffy *Thanks to the Light that Alex, Indy, Evy, and Bash bring to our Family.*

Dottie & Jim Farwell *In Memory and Honor of our Parents.*

Anna Mary Fisher *In Memory of my Sister Dorothy and her Husband Jack.*

Dorie Gabor *In Memory of my Husband, Steven Gabor, my Parents, and Siblings.*

Joy Garapic *In Memory of William Garapic, Loving Husband, Father, Grandfather.*

Diane Gressley *In Memory of Emma & Evan Gressley.*

Phyllis Hassler *In Memory of Frank Hassler.*

Diane Lightbody *In Honor of the Duda and Lightbody Family – here, and in their Heavenly Home.*

Dassie Matsuoka & Daughters *In Memory of James Matsuoka.*

Anne Melfo & *In Honor of Family & Friends we will miss this year.*

Doug Fawcett

Phyllis Molnar *In Memory of George & Bertha Ulsenheimer, my Parents, and Edward Molnar, Husband.*

Novak Family *In Memory of Wesley Novak, Pamela Novak, Jason Copp, and all of those who live on in our Hearts & Minds.*

Bettina Ortiz *In Loving Memory of Betty, Joseph, & Timothy*

Fred & Connie Pesek *In Memory of our Parents.*

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Eric Rahnenfuehrer *In Honor of Jan & Marjorie Rahnenfuehrer.*

Max Roha *In Loving Memory David J. Roha, Mary C. Roha, and Lois L. Wallin.*

Miriam R. Rosewicz *In Memory of Family Members, and Loved Ones.*

George & Carole Sinder *In Memory of our good Friend and Lovely Person,
Debbie Busta.*

Vicki Szabo *In Loving Memory of Vic Szabo.*

Jon K. Thompson *In Memory of my Family, Gone but not Forgotten.*

Bill & Anne Toneff *In Memory of Elizabeth & C.C. Thornton, and Vera & Milan Toneff*

Donn Whyte *In Memory of Wayne Whyte.*

The Joe Wilson Family *In Memory of Norinne F. Brownlow, and John M. Brownlow, Sr. & Randall P. Trefzger.*

Bill & Sherrill Witt *In Honor of Shirley Duncan & the Late Arch Duncan. In Memory of Bill & Mary Witt. In Memory of Jane R. Witt. In Memory of the Peart & Bishop Families. In Honor of all the Members of BUCC.*

Jill Zedan *For all those whose hearts are struggling this Christmas Season.*

BUCC CALENDAR JANUARY, 2015

Thursday, Jan. 1
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Office Closed

Friday, Jan. 2

Saturday, Jan. 3
9 am Facilities

Sunday, Jan. 4
10 am Worship and
Church School
11 am Coffee Hour

Monday, Jan. 5

Tuesday, Jan. 6

Wed, Jan. 7
6 am Early Birds
*Piano Lessons
Resume*

Thursday, Jan. 8
1 pm Bible Study
5:30 pm Joyful Noise
7:30 pm Choir

Friday, Jan. 9

Saturday, Jan. 10

Sunday, Jan. 11
10 am Worship and
Church School
11 am Coffee Hour
5:30 pm Percussion
6-7:30 pm Youth
Ministry

Monday, Jan. 12

Tuesday, Jan. 13

Wed., Jan. 14
6 am Early Birds
7 pm Council

Thursday, Jan. 15
PILLAR DEADLINE

1 pm Bible Study
5:30 pm Joyful Noise
7:30 pm Choir

Friday, Jan. 16

Saturday, Jan. 17

Sunday, Jan. 18
10 am Worship and
Church School
11 am Coffee Hour

Monday, Jan. 19

Tuesday, Jan. 20

Wednesday, Jan. 21
6 am Early Birds
11 am Women United

Thursday, Jan. 22
1 pm Bible Study
5:30 pm Joyful Noise
7:30 pm Choir

Friday, Jan. 23

Saturday, Jan. 24

Sunday, Jan. 25

10 am Worship and
Church School
11 am Coffee Hour
5:30 pm Percussion
6-7:30 pm Youth
Ministry

Monday, Jan. 26

Tuesday, Jan. 27

Wednesday, Jan. 28
6 am Early Birds

Thursday, Jan. 29
1 pm Bible Study
5:30 pm Joyful Noise
7:30 pm Choir

Friday, Jan. 30

Saturday, Jan. 31

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Participants in Worship

JANUARY 4, 2015

Lay Reader: David Ritchey
Head Usher: Caroline Chandler
Ushers: Beth Rheling, Heidi Spangler
Carole & George Snider
Acolyte: Michalina Fawcett
Peace Cndl: Evan Merritt
Sound: Dave Bernard
Commons Grtr: Chad Sproul
Narthex Grtr: Bridget Sproul
Flowers: *See Weekly Bulletin*
Nursery: Shauna Bigelow
Counters: Nancy Stella, Anna Mary Fisher
Server: Joy Garapic, Joanne Cook
Clean Up: Kathy & David Pastor
Snacks: Marla Corrado, Beth Rehling
Snow Hldr: Jim Farwell

JANUARY 11, 2015

Lay Reader: Tia Began
Head Usher: Diane Gressley
Ushers: Lindsey Maier, Sue Maier
Wes & Eve Novak
Acolyte: Courtni Began
Peace Cndl: Carli Began
Sound: Val Duffy
Commons Grtr: Marge Culver
Narthex Grtr: Jon Thompson
Flowers: *See Weekly Bulletin*
Nursery: Kathy Pastor
Counters: Carole Snider, Donn Whyte
Servers: Dottie Farwell, Vicki Szabo
Clean-Up: Jan Renovetz, Pat Bailey
Snacks: Tina Ortiz & Peg Duffy
Snow Herder: Cliff Cribbs

JANUARY 18, 2015

Lay Reader: Sam Koch
Head Usher: Jon Thompson
Ushers: Darlene Kelly, Jim Duffy
Chad & Bridget Sproul
Acolyte: Ben Rehling
Peace Cndl: Indira Bigelow
Sound: David Pastor
Commons Grtr: Anne Kelly
Narthex Grtr: Fred Pesek
Flowers: *See Weekly Bulletin*
Nursery: Marla Corrado
Counters: Bruce McCain, Sue Stenzel
Servers: Caroline Chandler, Carole Snider
Clean-Up: Jane & Cliff Cribbs
Snacks: Sue Maier, Kate Klonowski
Snow Herder: David Pastor

JANUARY 25, 2015

Lay Reader: Ed Lusk
Head Usher: Bob Chandler
Ushers: Jane & Cliff Cribbs
Acolyte: Jim Duffy Diane Gressley
Peace Candle: Naomi Klonowski
Sound: Olivia Klonowski
Commons Grtr: Max Roha
Narthex Grtr: Fred Pesek
Flowers: Jill Zedan
Nursery: *See Weekly Bulletin*
Counters: Robin Coyer-Westerberg
Servers: Jan Renovetz, Dassie Matsuoka
Clean-Up: Sue Stenzel, Julie Bernard
Snacks: Bridget & Chad Sproul
Vicki Szabo, Kathleen

Snow Herder: **Stewart**
 Billy Harris

The Pillar

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FIRST CLASS