



THE *Pillar*
BRECKSVILLE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

February 2023



TO BE LOVING, SERVING, AND ACCEPTING
OF ALL PEOPLE
WITH GOD'S LIFE-CHANGING POWER
AND GRACE

Pastor's Ponderings.....

Time flies when you're having fun! It's hard to believe that it's been a year since I began as pastor at Brecksville United Church of Christ. I have certainly found a warm welcome here. I have felt deeply grateful for that – twice! The first time I experienced your welcome happened around 2008, when Katie and I were newlyweds looking for a church. Brecksville UCC was the fifth church we visited. We knew very quickly that this would become our home because you, the congregation, were so gracious and hospitable.

I have great news to share! Others are feeling that welcome too. Our participation and membership are increasing. For the past three months, average attendance at Sunday services grew by 83% compared to the same period the previous year. We had six new members join in December, and another bunch ready to join this month. We are growing. With that new growth comes an opportunity for reflection.

In his book *Becoming a Welcoming Church* Thom Rainer encourages us to look at ourselves from the fresh perspective of a new guest coming to church for the first time. In almost all of his consultations, church members perceive their church to be friendly. But as he surveyed guests, he found that the guests typically perceived that same church experience differently.

This “perception chasm” existed because the members were indeed friendly . . . to one another. The newbies felt like they crashed a private party when they came to a new church.

Imagine that I'm a first-time visitor to Brecksville UCC. The front door is locked, so I guess I'll try the side door. Nope. Back door? Yep. Now that I'm inside, do I go upstairs or downstairs? How do I find the entrance to the sanctuary? Did anyone greet us? Introduce themselves? Provide name tags? Oops, I need to go to the bathroom, but I'm embarrassed to ask where it is, so I'll wander about. I see people talking to each other, will someone come over and talk to me?

(continued)

Pastor's Ponderings..... (continued)

People are moving downstairs after the service, I wonder why. Will anyone tell me what's going on downstairs? Now I'm at the table with coffee, will anyone join me? Seeing the experience from a guests perspective can help us all to express the kind welcome we want everyone to feel.

Most importantly, do we wear our name tags? This is the most common request I hear from our newest members. Everybody seems to know everybody; they even know the names of the new members. But the new members are learning a hundred names, even months later. It's awkward to ask, "what's your name again?" We can make things easier. Donning our name tags every Sunday goes a long way toward building friendships and feeling like a welcoming community.

A retired minister shared his experience of visiting a new church. True story. No one welcomed him. No one handed him a bulletin so he didn't know the hymn numbers. He was "greeted" by just one couple; they told him that this was their pew and he had to sit somewhere else. He never returned. Neither would I.

That did not happen here, thank God; and thank you. You have a strong tradition of being a welcoming church. Please keep it up. We have greeters and ushers. We have clear signs to help guests find their way around. There is no substitute for that warm friendly personal encounter with someone who actually cares, actually listens, actually helps each individual to feel loved and welcomed. Every one of us can live our call to discipleship in that way.

Please continue to be that kind of welcoming church. In all these ways, we become a nurturing, growing community that is based in love and lives the radical inclusivity and hospitality shown by Jesus.

- Rev. John King



FROM THE MINISTRIES OF BUCC

COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

With our new church membership software, signing up to help with BUCC Church Services should be “a Breeze”. Here are some instructions to explain how the Virtual Signup Sheet works.

In summary:

1. Every week or so, an email will be sent out with a link to the virtual signup sheet for the coming weeks.
2. Clicking on the link (which is tailored just for you) takes you into the signup sheet.
3. You can scroll through the different roles, seeing who is signed up for each week.
4. You can click on any open date and signup.
5. You can also click on any date with your name on it to opt out of that week.
6. Then press [Submit] to record your changes.
7. You can use that same link as many times as you like.

Sign up for as many dates as you want. When you are done, press the [Submit] button to record your changes. Call the office with any questions.

FINANCE

A check for \$2,870 was sent to Living Water Association for 2022 4th quarter dues of \$2,275, and \$595 for the Christmas Fund.

OCWM



“Doing justice, seeking peace and building community are central to the identity of the United Church of Christ.”

<https://www.ucc.org/understanding-the-issues/>

Part of doing justice is for us to participate in “nonpartisan faithful engagement in our democratic process”.

<https://www.ucc.org/our-faith-our-vote/>

At Brecksville UCC, we are answering this call by meeting each month to write to our legislators. Drawing on resources endorsed by the UCC, we’ll make our voices heard on issues that matter to us. **The next session will be on Monday February 13 at 6:15 at Panera in Brecksville.** (Normally, we meet on the second Tuesday of the month, but due to Valentine’s Day, this month’s writing will be on Monday.) The topic will be announced on Sunday prior to the session.

If you are unable to attend but would like to write on your own, please email Ann Kelley for specifics about the issue, sample language and addresses of our legislators. Stamped postcards will be available in the Church office for this purpose. For Ann’s email address, contact the office at 440-526-4364.

SPIRITUAL LIFE



MARDI GRAS - Six weeks without a BUCC celebration is six weeks too long! Let’s celebrate Mardi Gras on Sunday, February 19. This will be our first post-COVID Mardi Gras celebration, so those of you who know, KNOW! Wear a silly hat and get ready to hear some great New Orleans-style jazz. (We may even have a special guest musician or two!) Hallelujah!

(Continued on next page)

SPIRITUAL LIFE *(continued)*

SOUPS ON! Please join us for our annual Ash Wednesday soup supper, on February 22nd. We'll gather in Fellowship Hall for soup at 6:30 pm, followed by our Ash Wednesday service at 7:00. If your last name begins with A-M, please bring a loaf of bread to share (those with last names beginning with N-Z will be asked to contribute bread on Maundy Thursday).

Side Note: BUCC has the most amazing chefs! We're looking for six volunteers to make soup - three for Ash Wednesday and three for Maundy Thursday. If you're looking for an eager and appreciative audience to try out a new recipe, or if you already know you make a BUCC favorite, please let Betsey know. We're looking for about 30-40 servings (approximately 1 ½ gallons each) for either Ash Wednesday (February 22) or Maundy Thursday (April 6). Thank you!

SEASONAL CHOIR will begin preparing for Holy Week on Thursday February 23, from 7:00–7:50. During Holy Week, we commemorate events that are central to our faith: Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday); the Last Supper and Institution of Holy Communion (Maundy Thursday); Christ's crucifixion, death, and burial (Good Friday); and his miraculous Resurrection on Easter morning. If you enjoy singing in a group setting, consider joining us on this musical/spiritual journey. All are welcome to participate, including high school students.

JOYFUL NOISE (our youth choir) will begin practicing again on March 2nd and 9th (Thursdays) at 5:30. The plan is to present an easy song to the congregation on Sunday March 12th and assess our turnout for the group. We're hoping to reenergize this choir, but we understand that there are many after-school activities competing for the children's time. If your kids enjoy singing songs around the house, please encourage them to check out our youth choir. We have a great time together learning about Jesus and his message of love and acceptance of others. The songs are fun and easy to learn. Feel free to contact Dave D. with any questions.

STEWARDSHIP/LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT

MINDFULNESS & MEDITATION will be on break for 2 weeks in February – there is NO meditation group on 2/15 or 2/22.

Sessions will resume on **March 1.** Thanks! - Carol

Turn the Page

by David Ritchey

Think back three or four years to when we first started quarantining ourselves. What were some of the things we gave up? We gave up restaurants, movies, and sports events. Somehow we gave up friends. And, many of us gave up church.

When we gave up church, we took away the children, the special organizations (for example, the book club) and the friendships formed at coffee hour.

Now, we have an opportunity to turn the page – we can start again.

The local restaurants are open, and some new eateries have started serving. Movies and stage productions entertain us. Plenty of sports events either entertain or disappoint us. And the church is open to give us an opportunity to worship.

Our church has a new minister, who has boundless energy. The children have their own sermon. The adults have super activities. Of course, we have coffee hour – a chance to visit with old friends and an opportunity to meet new friends.

The music program gets its own paragraph. The congregation can sing old favorites and new songs. Those of us who would like to sing in the choir may do so. Think of singing in the choir as leading the congregation in worship.

Look around for opportunities to help with worship – Ushers, Communion helpers, Counters, A/V team and Lay Reader.

Yes, you can turn the page in your life. You may restart your life by opening the door and worshipping and by helping others worship.



Notes & Announcements:



SUNDAY FLOWERS MINISTRY –

Flowers in the chancel area add a special touch to our Sunday morning worship that we all enjoy. A big thank you to those who have volunteered to bring them in . . . and a welcome to anyone who would like to do so. We have several vases in the flower room that can be used, and you will be reimbursed for the cost of the flowers. The grocery stores in the area have a nice selection and some come from home gardens. If you are interested in helping out a few times during the year, please talk to or call anyone in the flower ministry. Thank you! – Janet Renovetz

INDIVIDUAL FLOWER DEDICATIONS – If you wish to have a specific Sunday's flowers dedicated in honor/in memory of a special personal occasion, there is a calendar on the wall just inside the double doors to the narthex. Please write your name on the date you would like, fill out a Dedication Request form (located beneath the calendar) and turn in that form with your payment to Joy Garapic. If you want to bring in a special plant or flowers to honor your dedication, please indicate this on the form ("I'm bringing in my own"). Thank you! – Janet Renovetz





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

Ian	Stewart	February 02
Ian	King	February 03
Michelina	Fawcett	February 05
Julie	Bernard	February 07
Marjorie	Culver	February 08
Jeanne	Cowden	February 12
Cliff	Stenzel	February 13
David	Pastor	February 27
Diane	Gressley	February 29

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



CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 2023

Weds., FEBRUARY 1

11am Mindfulness & Meditation

Thu., FEBRUARY 2

5pm Recorder/Dulcimer
7pm Choir

Fri., FEBRUARY 3

OFFICE CLOSED

Sat., FEBRUARY 4

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5

10am Worship Service

Mon., FEBRUARY 6

Tue., FEBRUARY 7

8:15am "Holy Grounds"
(Brecksville Panera)
6:30pm AA in Pilgrim Hall

Wed., FEBRUARY 8

11am Mindfulness & Meditation

Thu., FEBRUARY 9

5pm Recorder/Dulcimer
7pm Choir

Fri., FEBRUARY 10

OFFICE CLOSED

Sat., FEBRUARY 11

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12

10am Worship Service

Mon., FEBRUARY 13

Tue., FEBRUARY 14

8:15am "Holy Grounds"
(Brecksville Panera)
6:15pm Letter Writing
(Brecksville Panera)
6:30pm AA in Pilgrim Hall

Wed., FEBRUARY 15

PILLAR DEADLINE

Thu., FEBRUARY 16

5pm Recorder/Dulcimer
7pm Choir

Fri., FEBRUARY 17

OFFICE CLOSED

Sat., FEBRUARY 18

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Mardi Gras
10am Worship Service
*****POTLUCK!*****

Mon., FEBRUARY 20

PRESIDENTS DAY

Tue., FEBRUARY 21

8:15am "Holy Grounds"
(Brecksville Panera)
6:30pm AA in Pilgrim Hall

Wed., FEBRUARY 22

+ ASH WEDNESDAY +
6:30pm Soup Supper and
Worship Service

Thu., FEBRUARY 23

5pm Recorder/Dulcimer
7pm Seasonal Choir
8pm Choir

Fri., FEBRUARY 24

OFFICE CLOSED

Sat., FEBRUARY 25

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26

10am Worship Service

Mon., FEBRUARY 27

Tue., FEBRUARY 28

8:15am "Holy Grounds"
(Brecksville Panera)
6:30pm AA in Pilgrim Hall



PARTICIPANTS IN WORSHIP

FEBRUARY 5, 2023

Head Usher: TBD
Ushers: Allison Colbert
Evelyn Seager
Lay Reader: Jim Duffy
Greeter: Jon Thompson
Counters: Marge Culver
Janet Renovetz
Acolyte: TBD
Peace Candle: TBD
A/V: Betsey Wilson
Flowers: Anne Melfo
Snack: Caroline & Bob Chandler
Setup/Serve: TBD
Cleanup: TBD
Snow Herder: TBD

FEBRUARY 12, 2023

Head Usher: Diane Gressley
Ushers: Evelyn Seager
TBD
Lay Reader: Jon Thompson
Greeter: Bill Witt
Counters: Marge Culver
Janet Renovetz
Acolyte: TBD
Peace Candle: TBD
A/V: Jim Duffy
Flowers: TBD
Snack: TBD
Setup/Serve: TBD
Cleanup: TBD
Snow Herder: TBD



FEBRUARY 19, 2023

Head Usher: Jill Zedan
Ushers: Dave Bernard
Evelyn Seager
Lay Reader: Rose Kaval
Greeter: Carol Miller
Counters: Marge Culver
Janet Renovetz
Acolyte: TBD
Peace Candle: TBD
A/V: TBD
Flowers: Sue Stenzel
Snack: Potluck
Setup/Serve: TBD
Cleanup: TBD
Snow Herder: TBD

FEBRUARY 26, 2023

Head Usher: TBD
Ushers: Carol Miller
Evelyn Seager
Lay Reader: Jill Zedan
Greeter: Dave Bernard
Counters: Marge Culver
Janet Renovetz
Acolyte: TBD
Peace Candle: TBD
A/V: TBD
Flowers: Tia Began
Snack: TBD
Setup/Serve: TBD
Cleanup: TBD
Snow Herder: TBD

The Pillar

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United Church of Christ

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Brecksville United Church of Christ

FIRST CLASS

