



THE *Pillar*
BRECKSVILLE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

MAY 2023



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

Pastor's Ponderings.....

To really understand the UCC, we've got to understand two ideas: covenant and autonomy.

When the United Church of Christ formed in 1957, four different denominations joined as one. We made a covenant – that's what bonded us together. And yet, each of those four different denominations held different theologies and styles of worship – they were each autonomous.¹ I guess this explains the weirdness of the UCC.

The venerable rock band U2 expresses it well: "We're one but we're not the same." The equally venerable composer, Felix Mendelssohn said, "The essence of beauty is unity in diversity."

This can help us understand why the UCC can seem different from other Christian denominations. Most of them have strict and clear doctrines that require the assent of each member. The UCC doesn't do that, and sometimes it gets messy. But we prefer authenticity to tidiness.

In the UCC we *embrace* diversity. Different congregations make different decisions about communion, Open & Affirming, leadership structure and more. We like to keep it real. Each congregation and each person in the congregation can believe things differently and that's not a problem, because it's authentic. But, lordy, just because it's inspiring doesn't keep it from getting chaotic.

The Bible itself is both inspiring and chaotic. That's because the Bible reflects the lived experience of a diverse collection of authors, centuries, theologies, cultures, contexts and histories. If you want, you could use the Bible to execute disobedient children,² smash babies' heads against a rock,³ own slaves⁴ and commit genocide.⁵ But, please, don't try this at home.

With such wacky texts, how can we make sense of anything at all? How can we be "one, but not the same" or find that "unity in diversity." For me, it all comes down to John 15:12. Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that you

¹ In the words of the UCC Constitution: "*Within the United Church of Christ, the various expressions of the church relate to each other in a covenantal manner*" (par. #6). And, "*The autonomy of the Local Church is inherent and modifiable only by its own action*" (par. #18).

² Deuteronomy 21:18-21

³ Psalm 137:9

⁴ Ephesians 6:5

⁵ Joshua 10:40

love one another.” Love is the one commandment to rule them all. St. Augustine put it concisely, “Love and do what you will.”⁶

Abortion is an issue that is rocking our nation now. Many of those marching against abortion feel driven by their Christian faith. What about the UCC? This is where covenant and autonomy show their strength. We’re one, but we’re not the same.

In our congregation, we have members who are strongly “pro-life” and others who are strongly “pro-choice.” Both camps advocate for their positions. And both are welcome. Many churches are confounded by that. Not us; it’s who we are. It’s what we do. “Love and do what you will.”

The Bible says nothing directly about abortion, even though abortion was practiced in biblical times. What makes this issue unique is the unsettled debate over when a human life actually begins. Even theological major-leaguers like Thomas Aquinas said that the “ensoulment” of unborn babies (when they are regarded as persons) happened weeks after conception. It was 40 days for boys, 80 days for girls. Yeah – go figure.

If you believe that abortion is wrong, don’t have an abortion. If you believe that same sex marriage is wrong, don’t marry someone of your sex. If you believe it’s wrong to miss church on Sunday, then don’t miss church. We can hold deeply personal moral standards and live by them without necessarily imposing them on others. Religious liberty means we are free to practice our faith. It does not require others to conform to our faith.

Here’s an example. Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that blood transfusions are immoral. They cite compelling biblical reasons. Religiously and legislatively, we honor that; it’s their body and their choice. That doesn’t mean that they should make all blood transfusions illegal. They get to make moral decisions about their own bodies, but not mine and not yours.

So, the UCC encourages each person to make their own decisions about matters of personal faith and morality. We covenant together, while we also respect the autonomy of each person and each congregation. We can respectfully disagree and debate at coffee hour. And all the while Lois Lorenzo’s apple cake tastes just as yummy.

“Religion is at its best when it makes us ask hard questions of ourselves. Religion is at its worst when it deludes us into thinking we have all the answers for everyone else.” – Archibald MacLeish

⁶ Augustine Sermon #110



FROM THE MINISTRIES OF BUCC

FACILITIES

- Front doors - We are currently looking for someone to work on the doors to make them open and close easily.
- Steeple - We are seeking estimates for painting.
- Arlington House - We will be raising the rent on unit B from \$650 to \$750 per month beginning in June.
- Rear Doors - will be painted in the near future.
- Electric Rates - We will be changing provider before the increase in rates in June.
- House Cleaning - We will be reviewing all areas of the church for current storage. It is the intent to declutter. Input from all is welcome.
- New Member bulletin board - if this is desired and the ministry responsible, please let us know.

FINANCE

A check was sent to Living Water for first quarter dues of \$2,275.

Included in the check was \$865 for One Great Hour of Sharing. These gifts provide immediate aid and long-term support to people experiencing hunger, thirst, disaster, or crises around the world. Thank you for your generous contributions.

STATEMENT OF CASH AVAIL. AS OF MARCH 31ST:

	03/31/23	03/31/22
Sources of Cash		
General & Rental Fund	(7,619)	60,956
Market Value of Spendable Endowment	90,960	98,260
Spendable Restricted Funds	<u>257,792</u>	<u>149,590</u>
Total Available	341,133	308,806
Uses of Cash:		
Short Term Liabilities	<u>13,468</u>	<u>11,678</u>
Total Needed	13,468	11,678
Net Cash Available	327,665	297,128
Budgeted Deficit	(68,897)	
Available Cash / Deficit (years)	4.7	
Actual Deficit		(60,043)
Available Cash / Deficit (years)		4.9

OCWM



POSTCARD WRITING CAMPAIGN - At Brecksville UCC, we are answering the call of “doing justice and seeking peace” by meeting each month to write to our legislators about issues identified by the National UCC. **The next session will be on Tuesday May 9 at 6:15 pm, at Panera in Brecksville.** The topic will be announced on Sunday prior to the session.

If you are unable to attend but would still like to participate, you can find stamped postcards displayed in the lobby (outside the office). If you have any questions, please contact Ann Kelley – call the church for her contact information.

ADDITIONAL SOCIAL JUSTICE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY – Did you know that the UCC has a *Justice and Peace Action Network*? Check out their website by clicking here: [UCC Justice and Peace Action Network](https://ucc.org/justice-and-peace-action-network), or by typing in this website address: <https://p2a.co/o0Ur54O>. Listed there are over 30 issues on which you can take immediate action by sending emails to your Congressional Representatives and by sharing information on social media. Find an issue or issues you are passionate about and get started!

SPECIAL MOTHER'S DAY COLLECTION - BUCC will be taking an offering on May 7th to benefit Edna House in Cleveland, Ohio. The mission of Edna House is to assist women recovering from drug and alcohol addiction and to give them a chance at a new life, by providing a safe, sober place to live. Edna House is independent of government funding and is sustained only through donations from individuals and businesses in the communities they serve. Jennifer Lasky, director of Edna House, will be giving a short presentation during our May 7th service. In addition to cash donations, which are always appreciated, the current and ongoing need is for donations of coffee, powdered creamer, packets of sugar or sweet-n-low and tea bags. Please consider contributing to this amazing organization and thank you in advance for your generosity!

SPIRITUAL LIFE

SINCERE THANKS FROM SPIRITUAL LIFE – Lent, Holy Week and Easter were so very meaningful and joyful in 2023. Our little ministry can't thank you enough for giving so generously of your valuable time and innumerable talents.

We want to take a moment to specifically call out our six "Soup Goddesses," Jackie Cassara, Peg Duffy, Ann Kelley, Connie Schultz, Sue Stenzel and Sherrill Witt. Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday were made even more meaningful by your delicious contributions. We are truly blessed (and spoiled!)



SUMMER MUSIC VOLUNTEER PROGRAM – Over the next few weeks, Dave D. will be recruiting singers and instrumentalists to share their musical gifts with our congregation over the summer months. These musical offerings replace the regular choir anthems from June through Labor Day, so the choir can take a well-deserved break. If you'd like to volunteer, let Dave know so he can put you on the schedule. He'll be passing around a sign-up list during coffee hour. Dave will be glad to help you find a song or instrumental music, and will rehearse with you as much or as little as you'd like. High school students are welcome to participate.

MUGS, MUGS AND MORE MUGS! – Have you wondered why there is a table full of mugs down in Pilgrim Hall? Well we have a wonderful problem - we have run out of room for mugs for all the new members!!!

Back in February we cleaned out the mug bins and put all the mugs on several tables down in Pilgrim Hall. You've had a couple of months to go through the mugs, grab yours (and those on any family and friends who may not have been able to come by) and put them back in a bin of your choosing. We have also been posting pictures of mugs on the

SPIRITUAL LIFE

MUGS (*continued*):

Facebook page in an attempt to locate owners. We've been fairly successful and are now down to one table of unclaimed mugs - but they can't stay there forever!

At the end of May we will be packing away all of the orphan mugs - NONE will be thrown away unless someone specifically says to do so. Next time you are at the church, please swing by Pilgrim Hall and collect your mug -- feel free to get the mugs for any family or friends who haven't been able to come in -- and put the mug(s) in one of the bins along the wall. Any mugs that have not been taken or moved will be packed away.

Some of the mugs belonged to members that have passed away. We are planning a really cool wall display for these mugs, so help in identifying those is also appreciated!

If you have otherwise lost or broken your mug, we are happy to make a replacement! You can either sign up on the mug table, or email Sue Maier at Eyerienne@aol.com and we will make sure you have a new mug. We do ask that you make a donation to the general fund in response.

STEWARDSHIP/LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

LET'S GET GROWING!! The Stewardship Ministry invites those of you who plant a garden of vegetables, fruits, or flowers to plant some extra this spring and summer. If you're already doing all the work, just do a little more to help out BUCC. Whenever your harvest comes in, we will make a table available on Sundays after church to sell whatever you bring in. All of the funds will go to the General Fund to help bring down the deficit.



Announcements:

*The church has received the following
Thank You notes:*



"Dear BUCC Community –

Our Mom & Dad were involved with BUCC for many years, due to the caring and friendship of the congregation, the staff and leadership of the church.

We thank you all for the many years of kindness, caring and support that you provided to them both.

With Appreciation,

The Cowden Family – Jim, Mary Ann, Beth & Nancy”

"Thank you for the tulips. I put them on the coffee table so I could enjoy them all the time. The church is doing many things for us shut ins. It is really great.

-- Phyllis Hassler”



FLOWERS – The following members have volunteered to provide altar flowers this month:



May 7 – Maureen Stanley
14 – Janet Renovetz
21 – Tia Began
28 – Carole Snider

If you would like to dedicate flowers on a specific Sunday, please complete a “Dedication Request” form (under the narthex cork board) and return it to the office. If you have questions about this, please ask Janet Renovetz or contact the office at 440-526-4364.



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

Robin	Coyer	May 05
Lindsey	Maier	May 07
Gina	Cook	May 12
Terry	Heiman	May 18
Danyel	Esser	May 21
James	Tyler	May 21
David	Ritchey	May 26
Peg	Duffy	May 30

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



CALENDAR

MAY 2023

Mon., MAY 1

Tue., MAY 2

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

Wed., MAY 3

11am Mindfulness &
Meditation

Thu., MAY 4

5pm Recorder/Dulcimer
7pm Choir

Fri., MAY 5
OFFICE CLOSED

Sat., MAY 6

SUNDAY, MAY 7
10am Worship Service

Mon., MAY 8

Tue., MAY 9
8:15am "Holy Grounds"
(Brecksville Panera)
6:15pm Letter Writing
(Brecksville Panera)
6:30pm AA in Pilgrim Hall

Wed., MAY 10
11am Mindfulness &
Meditation

Thu., MAY 11

5pm Recorder/Dulcimer
7pm Choir

Fri., MAY 12

OFFICE CLOSED

Sat., MAY 13

5pm Recorder/Dulcimer
7pm Choir

SUNDAY, MAY 14

10am Worship Service
Mother's Day

Mon., MAY 15

PILLAR DEADLINE

Tue., MAY 16

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

Wed., MAY 17

11am Mindfulness &
Meditation

Thu., MAY 18

5pm Recorder/Dulcimer
7pm Choir

Fri., MAY 19

OFFICE CLOSED

Sat., MAY 20

5pm Recorder/Dulcimer
7pm Choir

SUNDAY, MAY 21

10am Worship Service

Mon., MAY 22

Tue., MAY 23
8:15am "Holy Grounds"
(Brecksville Panera)
6:30pm AA in Pilgrim Hall

Wed., MAY 24

11am Mindfulness &
Meditation

Thu., MAY 25

5pm Recorder/Dulcimer
7pm Choir

Fri., MAY 26

OFFICE CLOSED

Sat., MAY 27

SUNDAY, MAY 28
10am Worship Service

Mon., MAY 29

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

Wed., MAY 31

11am Mindfulness &
Meditation

PARTICIPANTS IN WORSHIP

MAY 7, 2023

Head Usher: Jill Zedan
Ushers: Allison Colbert
Evelyn Seager
Lay Reader: Jon Thompson
Greeter: TBD
Counters: Marge Culver
Janet Renovetz
Acolyte: TBD
Peace Candle: TBD
A/V: Tim Wallis
Flowers: Maureen Stanley
Snack: Shelley Novotney
Setup/Serve: Shelley Novotney
Cleanup: TBD

MAY 14, 2023

Head Usher: TBD
Ushers: Evelyn Seager
Carole Snider
Lay Reader: Jim Duffy
Greeter: TBD
Counters: Marge Culver
Jim Duffy
Acolyte: TBD
Peace Candle: TBD
A/V: Tim Wallis
Flowers: Janet Renovetz
Snack: Jon Thompson
Setup/Serve: TBD
Cleanup: TBD

MAY 21, 2023

Head Usher: TBD
Ushers: Evelyn Seager
Carole Snider
Lay Reader: Jill Zedan
Greeter: TBD
Counters: Marge Culver
Janet Renovetz
Acolyte: TBD
Peace Candle: TBD
A/V: David Pastor
Flowers: Tia Began
Snack: TBD
Setup/Serve: TBD
Cleanup: TBD

MAY 28, 2023

Head Usher: Jill Zedan
Ushers: Evelyn Seager
TBD
Lay Reader: Rose Kaval
Greeter: TBD
Counters: Marge Culver
Janet Renovetz
Acolyte: TBD
Peace Candle: TBD
A/V: TBD
Flowers: Carole Snider
Snack: Jenn Elting
TBD
Setup/Serve: TBD
Cleanup: TBD



The Pillar

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