



# Brecksville

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# United Church of Christ

23 Public Square • Brecksville • Ohio • 44141 • 440-526-4364

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

*"A good journey  
begins with  
knowing where  
you are  
and being  
willing to go  
somewhere  
else."*

*- Richard Rohr*



**Epiphany Sunday, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023 • 10:00 AM**

***Pastor***

• John King

***Director of Music***

• David Debick

***Financial Secretary***

• Joy Garapic

***Office Manager***

• Anne Melfo

***Ministers – All of Our Members***

## **Affirmation of Welcome**

***We are an Open and Affirming Congregation, welcoming ALL of God's children.***

*Whether you are single, married, divorced, separated,  
or partnered,*

***You Are Welcome Here!***

*Whatever your race, ethnicity, or age,*

***You Are Welcome Here!***

*Whatever your gender identity or sexual orientation,*

***You Are Welcome Here!***

*Whatever your religious background, creed, or spirituality,*

***You Are Welcome Here!***

*Whatever your social or economic circumstances,*

***You Are Welcome Here!***

*Whatever your health conditions, impairments, or mobility needs,*

***You Are Welcome Here!***

***Whoever we may be, wherever we are on our life's journey,***

***We welcome one another to this place,***

***Even as God welcomes us all in Jesus Christ!***



- *Please sign our guest book in the narthex before you leave - if you are interested in learning more about our church, please feel free to speak to our pastor.*
- *Hearing difficulty? Please talk to any usher about a Personal Sound receiver available for your use.*

### **Office Hours:**

**Mon., Tues., Wed., Thurs.: 9:30am - 1:30pm**

**Church Phone: 440-526-4364**

**e-mail: [buccoffice23@gmail.com](mailto:buccoffice23@gmail.com) – web address: [www.BrecksvilleUCC.org](http://www.BrecksvilleUCC.org)**

**Please submit your announcements by noon on Wednesday – Thank You!**



## Epiphany Sunday December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023

**Prelude**

**Brightest and Best of the Stars of the Morning**  
*Star in the East*, from *The Southern Harmony*, 1835

**Welcome & Announcements**

**Quiet Meditation**

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*"The advent of light into the darkness of the world is not the goal;  
it is part of the movement toward the goal" - Miroslav Volf*

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### ***Gathering in God's Presence***

*\* Please Stand as you are able*

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP:**

Reader: We gather in the Light that was before, is now, and ever will be.

**Congregation: We seek the Light's ancient wisdom.**

Reader: We gather in the Light that is God's continuing gift.

**Congregation: We live in the Light's new wisdom.**

Reader: We gather in the Light that is our own, emerging anew each day.

**Congregation: We seek to share this wisdom, nurtured in the Light from Bethlehem's cradle.**

## Hymn of Praise

## *We Three Kings of Orient Are*

Hopkins

1. We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star:

**Refrain: O star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright,  
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.**

2. Born a king on Bethlehem plain, Gold I bring, to crown him again,  
King forever, ceasing never, over us all to reign: **(Refrain)**

3. Frankincense to offer have I, incense owns a deity high;  
Prayer and praising, all souls raising, worship him, God most high: **(Refrain)**

4. Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom;  
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone-cold tomb: **(Refrain)**

5. Glorious now behold him arise, King and God and sacrifice,  
Alleluia, alleluia, earth to the heav'ns replies: **(Refrain)**

(Words and tune: John Henry Hopkins, 1820-1891)

## \* Words of Grace

### \*Song of Praise:

### *Glory to God*

Pablo Sosa 1988



Glo - ry, glo - ry, glo - ry! Glo - ry to God in the high - est, And on earth be



peace to all peo - ple, for God loves us all.

## **Readings**

(See back of bulletin for complete readings)

**First Reading - Ephesians 3:1-12**

**Gospel Reading - *Matthew 2:1-12***

**Continuing Testament - Laurel A. Dykstra**

### Time with Young Worshipers

**Musical Offering      *The Magi Who to Bethlehem Did Go*      Trad. Puerto Rican carol  
Dave Debick, soloist; with Percussion Group**

*The magi who to Bethlehem did go were the heralds of the coming of Messiah;  
And with joy we also would hasten to announce the news today.*

*1. From a distant land we come with humble greeting,  
where the eastern star our caravan is leading.*

*Refrain: Ever-shining star, God's brilliant dawn revealing,  
ever guide our way, God's presence still assuring.  
Ever-shining star, God's brilliant dawn revealing,  
ever guide our way, God's peace to all the earth.*

*2. To the newborn Child who has no earthly treasure  
I have come with gold to bring delight and pleasure.*

*Refrain: To the Child of God rich incense I am bringing,  
with aroma sweet that heavenward is winging.*

*3. To the Child who came to bring us heaven's gladness.  
I have come with myrrh, a sign of coming sadness.*

*Refrain: Ever-shining star, God's brilliant dawn revealing,  
ever guide our way, God's presence still assuring.  
Glory be to God, who sent the Child of Heaven,  
Glory be to God, and peace to all on earth.*

*(Words: Manuel Fernández Juncas, 1846-1928; English version: Carolyn Jennings, 1993)*

**Sermon by Pastor John King**

**Hymn of Reflection**

***The First Nowell***

**#139**

## ***The Church at Prayer***

Ann Kelley, Sue Renovetz, Jon Thompson, Cliff Stenzel, Allison Colbert, Marilyn Pay, Frances Posey, Russ King, George Snider, Mac Hoppel, Dassie Matsuoka, Kathy Smith, Rose Kaval, Bee Ortiz, Terry Heiman, Cindy Burton, Elizabeth Gadus, Ann Klonowski, Sheila Day, Jan Wardlaw, Stan McCain, Kathleen Stewart & Joe Blasko (her father), “Edna House”, people who are unemployed and under employed.

***(Please let the office know of any additions, corrections, or changes to our prayer lists.)***

### **Silent Meditation**

### **Prayers of the Church**

#### **OUR LORD’S PRAYER: [UNISON]**

Our Father-Mother, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen.

## ***Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings***

### **\* Invitation to the Offering**

#### **\* Offertory Hymn**

We celebrate Messiah's birth,  
a bold new age upon the earth  
of justice, peace, and hope renewed.  
Receive our gifts for greater good. Amen.

#### **\* PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING: [UNISON]**

Bless these gifts, offered in hope for the fulfilling of all your promises, gracious God. May they draw all your children together in peace and joy, in order that the world may be filled with Christ’s love. Amen.

## Going with God's Love

\* Hymn of Departure

*Go Tell It on the Mountain*

#154

Carrying the Light of Christ into the World – Acolyte

### \*Circle of Community

As we move to form a circle around the pews, we will sing **Halle, Halle, Hallelujah (3 times) Hallelujah, Hallelujah**. After the benediction is pronounced, we will sing it once more. Our circle is open near the door as a symbol of our welcome to new people to our community of faith.

Hal-le, hal-le, hal - le - lu - ja. Hal-le, hal-le, hal - le - lu - ja.

Hal-le, hal-le, hal - le - lu - ja. Hal-le, hal-le, hal - le - lu - ja.

The musical score is written for two staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (half). Chords above the staff are: A (above G), E (above A), A (above B), D (above C), Bm (above B), and E (above E). The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (half). Chords above the staff are: A (above G), C#7 (above A), F#m (above B), Bm (above C), E7sus4 (above B), E7 (above A), and A (above E). The lyrics are: 'Hal-le, hal-le, hal - le - lu - ja. Hal-le, hal-le, hal - le - lu - ja.' and 'Hal-le, hal-le, hal - le - lu - ja. Hal-le, hal-le, hal - le - lu - ja.'

Benediction

Postlude

*O Light of Light*

Ratcliff



## Readings

### **First Reading** **Ephesians 3:1-12**

This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles - for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of God's power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that God has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

### **Gospel Reading** **Matthew 2:1-12**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, Magi from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.



## Readings

### **Gospel Reading (*continued*)**

They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called for the Magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

### **Continuing Testament – by Laurel A. Dykstra**

There weren't three of them, they weren't kings, they didn't have camels, and we don't know they were men. When we hear the stories of Jesus' early life, it is almost impossible to look at a text apart from what we think we know about it. For most of us, the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke are entwined with one another and their Hebrew scripture roots. In Matthew, the Magi come to a house in Bethlehem; there is no manger, no shepherds, and no heavenly host.

Three gifts are named: gold, frankincense, and myrrh... While we retain the details of wealth and power described in these passages—kings, camels, gold, honor—we often lose the theme of justice that pervades Isaiah and is explicit in [Isaiah 60 and] Psalm 72: "May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service. For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper."

## Readings

### Continuing Testament (*continued*)

When we peel away the surplus meaning and focus on justice and power, the real gift of the mysterious and exotic visitors of greeting cards and Christmas pageants is a warning. Alerted by a star to his birth, the Magi seek the prince of peace in Jerusalem, the center of power. They are summoned and go to Herod the king, alerting him to the birth of a potential rival. While the Magi return, oblivious and unscathed, to their own country by another route, the family they honored flees as refugees, and their neighbors' children are slaughtered. When the privileged seek salvation in the places of power, the consequences for the vulnerable and oppressed are brutal, but often unseen.



# Announcements:

**THE UN-HANGING OF THE GREENS** – Immediately following today’s service, we will be taking down all Christmas decorations and the tree. The more folks who participate, the faster it goes! We are beyond grateful for your willing hearts and hands.



**ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING** - BUCC Council has set the annual Congregational Meeting to approve the Budget and Slate of Officers for the 2024 Church Year for Sunday, January 14, 2024, immediately following the regular worship service.

In lieu of the usual December meeting for presentation of the Slate of Officers and preliminary Budget, Council has agreed to prepare and send out this information to all congregation members via e-mail. Hard copies will be available at the office or mailed upon request to anyone who would prefer it. This will allow proper time for church members to review the Budget and Slate of Officers and respond to Council with comments or questions prior to the January 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Sanctuary TV Artwork: From Rob Blair Photography, “Winter at O’Neil Woods”. Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Used with permission. <http://www.robertblairphotography.com/prints.html>

Attendance on Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Adults: 109; Kids: 17; Livestream: 6; Total: 132

# Special Thanks

## DECEMBER 31, 2023

<b>Head Usher:</b>	Diane Gressley
<b>Ushers:</b>	Evelyn Seager Heidi Spangler Bridget Sproul
<b>Lay Reader:</b>	Peg Duffy
<b>Greeter:</b>	Marge Culver
<b>Counters:</b>	Janet Renovetz
<b>A/V Team:</b>	Jim Duffy
<b>Flowers:</b>	Janet Renovetz
<b>Snack:</b>	Jenn Elting Lois Lorenzo
<b>Set Up/Serve:</b>	Melanie Falls Carol Miller
<b>Clean Up:</b>	<b><i>Volunteers Needed</i></b>
<b>Snow Herder:</b>	<b><i>Volunteer Needed</i></b>

hello 2024

## JANUARY 7, 2024

<b>Head Usher:</b>	Jill Zedan
<b>Ushers:</b>	Annette Pedersen Evelyn Seager Kate Matthews
<b>Lay Reader:</b>	Lori Molesky
<b>Greeter:</b>	Marjorie Culver
<b>Counters:</b>	Janet Renovetz Jim Duffy
<b>A/V Team:</b>	<b><i>Volunteer Needed</i></b>
<b>Flowers:</b>	Lois Lorenzo
<b>Snack:</b>	<b><i>Volunteer Needed</i></b>
<b>Set Up/Serve:</b>	<b><i>Volunteers Needed</i></b>
<b>Clean Up:</b>	<b><i>Volunteers Needed</i></b>
<b>Snow Herder:</b>	<b><i>Volunteer Needed</i></b>

