



THE *Pillar*  
BRECKSVILLE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

JANUARY 2024

*Behold,*  
*I am making all things* **New**

REVELATION 21:5

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

## ***Pastor's Ponderings.....***

“Do you teach morality at your church?”

That was the question put to me last month by someone very dear to me. On the surface, the question seems benign; rather ordinary. But it was almost as loaded as the question put before Jesus in John 8:5 “Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?”

“You see,” they told me, “The problem with our country these days is that they don’t teach young people morality anymore.” Ah, yes. I could see where this was going.

Here was my response: “Of course we teach morality at our church. It is in every sermon, every children’s activity, every prayer. I suppose there are some churches who don’t recognize that as ‘morality’ because we try to focus on the moral values of Jesus.”

***Love. Kindness. Inclusion. Peace. Service. Truth.***

Scan the gospels. Look at Jesus words and deeds. These are the moral values Jesus targeted.

***Feed the hungry. Care for the sick. Welcome the stranger. Don’t be a hypocrite.***

The morality of Jesus seems distant from the “morality” of many religious organizations. I have an uncle who dropped out of religion long ago. He said he was repulsed by “pelvic religions.” He meant that religions seemed overwhelmingly preoccupied with other people’s pelvic regions, especially when ferreting out those they could judge and condemn. That’s what some mean by “morality.” That’s why the question was loaded. Problem is, Jesus has been hijacked by many churches that try to make Jesus appear to say and do things that the Jesus of the Gospels never said or did.

## ***Pastor's Ponderings (continued)***

Perhaps we need to save Jesus from the church. Let's return to the Jesus of the gospels. Let's focus on the morality of Jesus.

***Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the hungry. Blessed are those who mourn.***

Socrates complained that young people lacked manners and respect for authority. That was 2,400 years ago. It's a time-honored tradition that the older generation complains about the younger – and vice versa. I see, in Jesus, a better way; a more hopeful way.

To paraphrase Liz Gilbert, today's young people are the most sensitive, least violent, least bullying, least racist, least homophobic, most globally minded, most compassionate, most environmentally-minded, socially conscious group of young people this country has ever seen.

Perhaps if we could rediscover and boldly proclaim the moral values that Jesus actually prioritized, we could escape the cycle of perpetually complaining and endlessly fretting about their moral lapses. I know that the moral values of Jesus resonate with those young people, but many of them have given up on finding such a church.

Yes. We teach morality in our church. It is the morality of Jesus.

***Love one another. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. The truth will set you free.***



## FROM THE MINISTRIES OF BUCC

### CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

This children's pageant, "Christmas Joy", really was a joy! From the costumes to the refreshments afterwards, it was a special treat for all of us at BUCC. Many thanks to Miss Mindy Wade-Harris and all of the families who participated.

### SPIRITUAL LIFE

**MUSIC MINISTRY** - BUCC's adult choir will begin rehearsing again in 2024, on Thursday January 4 from 7:00-8:15 PM. Singing in choir is a wonderful way to prepare spiritually for upcoming services. There's an abundance of camaraderie, diverse musical styles, good humor, updates on BUCC members in need of prayer, and mutual support and affirmation. Dave Debick regularly makes recordings as listening aids for choir members who request them. Check us out some Thursday evening and experience the joy of making a joyful noise unto our God! Feel free to contact Dave with any questions.

## **STAFF/CONGREGATION RELATIONS (SCR)**

### **Healthy Communication Procedure**

Brecksville UCC Council, at the recommendation of the Staff Congregation Relations Ministry, has committed to follow the healthy communication processes, as outlined in the UCC Booklet, ***A Sure Foundation***. What follows is a brief summary of that document:

If a member has a concern involving the pastor, a staff member, or another member of the congregation, the Staff Congregation Relations Ministry requests that you take the following steps:

1. Speak to the pastor, staff member or other congregation member directly. If you would be more comfortable, you may request that the pastor (if not involved in the concern) or an SCR ministry member join that conversation as a facilitator or holy witness.
  - If you have already spoken to the person but are dissatisfied, you may contact the Pastor (if not involved in the concern) or the SCR Ministry for further assistance with further communications.
  - If you are not comfortable speaking to the person directly, and the issue is important, then move to Step 2.
2. Put your concern in writing, date and sign it. Be specific and provide examples if possible. Forward your written concern to the Pastor (if not involved in the concern) or the Chairperson of the SCR Ministry. SCR will not accept anonymous concerns nor petitions from groups. You will receive a written acknowledgement verifying receipt of your concern and confirming that it will be discussed at the next SCR meeting, if not before.
3. The SCR ministry (including the pastor) will decide on a course of action if further action is necessary. You will be notified at the conclusion of the process and informed of the outcome.

## *Announcements:*



to Dave Debick and Mindy Harris-Wade! The hard work that they put in every year, to present the cantata and the pageant, fills our church with true Christmas Spirit!



### **FROM THE MAILBOX –**

*“Hi from Florida! We hope all are doing well and enjoy Christmas. We watched the Cantata on our computer, and Dave and the choir did their usual fine effort. – Dot & Stu (Bailey)”*



**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 prefers it. This will allow proper time for church members to review the Budget and Slate of Officers, and to respond to Council with comments or questions prior to the January 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## *Announcements: (continued)*

### **INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY –**

January 27<sup>th</sup> is an international Memorial Day commemorating the victims of the Holocaust. It commemorates the genocide that resulted in the death of an estimated 6 million Jews, 1 million Gypsies, 250,000 mentally and physically disabled people, and 9000 homosexual men by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. It was designated by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005, on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps and the end of the Holocaust.



**HOLOCAUST  
REMEMBRANCE  
- DAY -**



**SCAM ALERT** - Unfortunately someone pretending to be Pastor John has sent emails and/or texts to some of our members, containing requests for money, gift cards or account numbers. Please always remember that Pastor John would NEVER request these items in an email or a text.

**PLEASE DON'T REPLY** to these texts or emails – the best course of action if you receive a suspicious email message is to report it as "spam" (or "phishing", depending on your email provider), and then delete it. If you receive a suspicious text, please delete it first and then report it to the church office (440-526-4364). As always, if you have any questions or concerns about this, please don't hesitate to contact Anne at 440-526-4364. Thank you for your patience!

## *Announcements: (continued)*

**BRAVER ANGELS** - Braver Angels will be meeting in Pilgrim Hall, at 6 pm on the third Wednesday of every month, starting on January 17th. This group is leading the nation's largest cross-partisan, volunteer-led movement to bridge the political divide. Through community gatherings, real debates, and grassroots leaders working together, Braver Angels is offering America what it needs to overcome the bitterness of our partisan divide. For more information, go to their website at:  
<https://braverangels.org/>



**BUCC NURSERY** – If you love little children and want to share some of your time with our infants and toddlers, please consider signing up on Breeze to be a Nursery Assistant on Sundays during the church service. We are blessed that our own Amelia Elting has volunteered to be our Nursery Attendant until we can hire a permanent staff member to fill the position. We will be exploring the feasibility of hiring an attendant in the first quarter of 2024.

While Amelia is very capable, she may require a helping hand on occasion, so we are looking for several volunteers who are willing to check in with her prior to the start of the service to see if she needs help.

If you are a parent of an infant or toddler, check in with Amelia prior to the start of service if you want to utilize the nursery. You will find Amelia in the Nursery or in Ms. Mindy's classroom. We ask parents of Nursery children to please fill out a Nursery information form – they are in the Nursery, in a binder near the door. We also ask that you be available by text if our Nursery Attendant needs you to return to the nursery for any reason. Thank you!

-- Evie Novak, SCR



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

Cassy	Martinez	January 05
Maxwell	Hunt	January 07
Sue	Maier	January 07
John	King	January 14
Janet	Renovetz	January 18
Dorothy	Cook	January 22
Jonathan	Cook	January 30
Cliff	Cribbs	January 31

**\*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!**



# CALENDAR

## JANUARY 2024

**Mon., JANUARY 1**

**\*OFFICE CLOSED\***

**Tue., JANUARY 2**

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

**Wed., JANUARY 3**

11am Mindfulness &  
Meditation  
6pm SCR  
7pm Stewardship

**Thu., JANUARY 4**

7pm Adult Choir

**Fri., JANUARY 5**

**\*OFFICE CLOSED\***

**Sat., JANUARY 6**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 7**  
10am Worship Service  
11:30am Membership

**Mon., JANUARY 8**

**Tue., JANUARY 9**  
8:15am "Holy Grounds"  
(Brecksville Panera)  
6:30pm AA in Pilgrim Hall  
7pm Spiritual Life

**Wed., JANUARY 10**

11am Mindfulness &  
Meditation  
7pm Council

**Thu., JANUARY 11**

5pm Recorder/Dulcimer/  
Percussion  
7pm Adult Choir

**Fri., JANUARY 12**

**\*OFFICE CLOSED\***

**Sat., JANUARY 13**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 14**  
10am Worship Service  
11:15am OCWM

**Mon., JANUARY 15**

**\*OFFICE CLOSED\***  
**MLK Day**

**Tue., JANUARY 16**

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

**Wed., JANUARY 17**

11am Mindfulness &  
Meditation  
6pm Braver Angels

**Thu., JANUARY 18**

5pm Recorder/Dulcimer/  
Percussion  
7pm Adult Choir

**Fri., JANUARY 19**

**\*OFFICE CLOSED\***

**Sat., JANUARY 20****SUNDAY, JANUARY 21**

10am Worship Service

**Mon., JANUARY 22**

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

**Wed., JANUARY 24**

11am Mindfulness &  
Meditation

**Thu., JANUARY 25**

5pm Recorder/Dulcimer/  
Percussion  
7pm Adult Choir

**Fri., JANUARY 26**

**\*OFFICE CLOSED\***

**Sat., JANUARY 27**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 28**  
10am Worship Service

**Mon., JANUARY 29**

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

**Wed., JANUARY 31**

11am Mindfulness &  
Meditation

# PARTICIPANTS IN WORSHIP

## JANUARY 7, 2023

Head Usher: Jill Zedan  
Ushers: Annette Pedersen  
Evelyn Seager  
Lay Reader: Kate Matthews  
Greeter: Lori Molesky  
Counters: Marge Culver  
Janet Renovetz  
Nursery Asst.: TBD  
Acolyte: TBD  
A/V: Jim Duffy  
Flowers: TBD  
Snack: TBD  
Setup/Serve: TBD  
Cleanup: TBD  
Snow Herder: TBD

## JANUARY 21, 2023

Head Usher: TBD  
Ushers: Evelyn Seager  
TBD  
Lay Reader: Jim Duffy  
Greeter: TBD  
Counters: Marge Culver  
TBD  
Nursery Asst.: TBD  
Acolyte: TBD  
A/V: TBD  
Flowers: TBD  
Snack: TBD  
Setup/Serve: TBD  
Cleanup: TBD  
Snow Herder: TBD

## JANUARY 14, 2023

Head Usher: TBD  
Ushers: Evelyn Seager  
Heidi Spangler  
Lay Reader: Jill Zedan  
Greeter: TBD  
Counters: Marge Culver  
Janet Renovetz  
Nursery Asst.: TBD  
A/V: Fred Pedersen  
Flowers: TBD  
Snack: TBD  
Setup/Serve: TBD  
Cleanup: TBD  
Snow Herder: TBD

## JANUARY 28, 2023

Head Usher: TBD  
Ushers: TBD  
Lay Reader: Rose Kaval  
Greeter: TBD  
Counters: Marge Culver  
TBD  
Nursery Asst.: TBD  
A/V: TBD  
Flowers: TBD  
Snack: Jenn Elting  
Setup/Serve: TBD  
Cleanup: TBD  
Snow Herder: TBD

# *The Pillar*

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Brecksville

United Church of Christ

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