



# 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***

*"Apprehend  
God in all  
things, for God  
is in all things.  
Every single  
creature is full  
of God and is a  
book about  
God. Every  
creature is a  
word of God."*

*– Meister Eckhart*



**First Sunday in Lent, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024 • 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)**

<b>Please submit your announcements by noon on Wednesday – Thank You!</b>
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# First Sunday in Lent - February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Prelude

*Renew Your People*

Currie

Welcome & Announcements

Quiet Meditation     ***Lord, Prepare Me to Be a Sanctuary***     Thompson/Scruggs

*"Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true;  
with thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you."*

(Words and Music: Copyright © 1982 by Whole Armour & Full Armor Publishing Companies)

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*The 'kingdom of heaven' is not something lying above the earth or coming after death. It doesn't have a yesterday or a day after tomorrow, and it will not arrive in '1,000 years.' It is an experience of the heart. It is everywhere and it is nowhere." Friedrich Nietzsche*

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

*\* Please Stand as you are able*

### **\* CALL TO WORSHIP:**

Reader: The voice of God proclaims of Jesus, "You are my beloved."

**People: We, too, are God's beloved children, loved and embraced.**

Reader: With all the voices reminding us that we are not enough or don't belong, it is tempting to forget our place in God's Realm.

**People: With the waters of baptism and the voice of God's promises, we can face the temptations of any wilderness or desert that would draw us away from the Source of our hope.**

Reader: Embrace your belovedness.

**People: We rejoice in God's unending love for us!**

Hymn of Praise

***Lord Jesus, Who Through Forty Days***

#211

### **\* PRAYER OF INVOCATION: [UNISON]**

**O God of waters and deserts, God of hope and horizons, we celebrate your presence among us and among all your people. You have proclaimed that Jesus was beloved and, tenderly, you have claimed us as your own. Open the skies. Break through the clouds. Fall softly upon our shoulders and say our names with joy. For this day and each day, no matter what the other voices may say, we are your beloved and we rejoice in your inbreaking Realm. Amen and Amen!**

**\* Pastor's Prayer**

**\*Song of Praise:**

**Glory to God**

Pablo Sosa 1988

Glory, glory, glory – glory to God in the highest! (twice)  
And on earth be peace to all people, for God loves us all. (twice)

**Readings**

**(See back of bulletin for complete readings)**

**First Reading - Ezekiel 36:24-28 (NRSV)**

**Gospel Reading - Mark 1:9-15**

**Continuing Testament - by Norman Maclean**

**Youth Anthem**

**Change My Heart, O God**

Espinosa



*Change my heart, O God; make it ever true.*

*Change my heart, O God; may I be like you.*

*You are the Potter; I am the clay.*

*Mold me and make me; this is what I pray.*

(Text and Music: Eddie Espinosa; Copyright 1982 Mercy/Vineyard Publishing)

We have a special guest for today's children's time. Connie Schultz will present the kids with her newest book, *Lola and the Troll*. I have asked her to present the whole book. It beautifully presents our Lenten theme: replacing our hardened, stoney hearts, with a real heart that shows kindness. So I have asked Connie to spend extra time with the kids. But don't panic; my sermon will just make a *very short* connection to our lives. - Pastor John



**Anthem**

**Soften My Heart**

mas

*Soften my heart with all that You are,  
I am undone by the weight of Your love.*

*Save me from pride, restore my sight,  
help me to see in the light of Your grace.*

*Refrain: I lay down all of me at Your feet. Would you take this heart of stone and make it beat?*

*The Parent's own heart still bears the scars  
from giving the Son to the world God so loved.*

*You lead the way in scandalous grace.  
You never grow tired of goodness and love. (Refrain)*

*There's a fullness in the grace of God,  
where the Parent's heart is filled with love.  
To the sons and daughters lost and found  
there is beauty here where grace abounds.  
Holy is the Lord. Holy is the Lord. (Refrain)*

## **Pastor's Reflection by Pastor John King**

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

The Snider Family, Phyllis Hassler, Ann Kelley, Cliff Stenzel, Sue Renovetz, Joe Blasko, Sister Francis Marie Seiler, Russ King, Jon Thompson, Gayle Colbert, Marilyn Pay, Frances Posey, Mac Hoppel, Dassie Matsuoka, Kathy Smith, Rose Kaval, Bee Ortiz, Terry Heiman, Cindy Burton, Elizabeth Gadus, Sheila Day, Jan Wardlaw, Stan McCain, Kathleen Stewart, Ann Klonowski, "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 now are in the time of Lent,  
To learn again what Jesus meant.  
His life and message are so great,  
We send these gifts to celebrate! Amen.**

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

**Abundant God, receive these gifts of love from your servants and use them for the breaking in of your Realm of love and light. In the name of Jesus, whose way calls us forth in service, we pray. Amen.**



**Communion Music**

***Arabesque***

**L. Vierre**

**Prayer of Thanksgiving: [UNISON]**

**Eternal God, you have called your people from east and west and north and south, to feast at the table of Jesus Christ. We thank you for Christ's presence and for the spiritual food of Christ's body and blood. By the power of your Holy Spirit, keep us faithful to your will. Go with us to the streets, to our homes, and to our places of labor and leisure that whether we are gathered or scattered, we may be the servant church of the servant Christ, in whose name we rejoice to pray. Amen.**

***Going with God's Love***

**\* Hymn of Departure**

***Take My Life, God, Let It Be***

**#448**



**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 **Hear Our Prayer, O God (below)**. 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.



### \* Benediction

Postlude

*Go Forth for God*

Routley



## Readings

### **First Reading**

#### **Ezekiel 36:24-28 (NRSV)**

I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

### **Gospel Reading**

#### **Mark 1:9-15**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately compelled him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."



## Readings

**Continuing Testament** – Excerpts from *A River Runs Through It*, by Norman Maclean

For some time, though, my father struggled for more to hold on to. “Are you sure you have told me everything you know about his death?” he asked.

I said, “Everything.”

“It’s not much, is it?”

“No,” I replied. “But you can love completely without complete understanding.”

“That I have known and preached,” he said.

Once my father came back with another question. “Do you think I could have helped him?” he asked.

Even if I might have thought longer I would have made the same answer. “Do you think I could have helped him?” I answered. How can a question be answered that asks a lifetime of questions?

Of course, now I am too old to be much of a fisherman, and now of course I usually fish the big waters alone, although some friends think I shouldn’t. Like many fly fishermen in western Montana where the summer days are almost Arctic in length, I often do not start fishing until the cool of the evening. Then in the arctic half-light of the canyon, all existence fades to a being with my soul and memories and the sounds of the Big Blackfoot River and a four-count rhythm and the hope that a fish will rise.

Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world’s great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs.

I am haunted by waters.

# Announcements:

**TODAY'S FLOWERS** are dedicated by Pat Rehm and Carol Miller, "In celebration of *Lola and the Troll*, bringing Connie's words of inspiration to the world."

**ANNUAL REPORT** – The 2023 Annual Report was emailed on Weds., 2/14. If you would like a paper copy, please contact Anne in the office – 440-526-4364.

**LENTEN STUDY GROUP** - Today is your last chance to sign up for the Lenten Study Group. We begin on Monday, February 19 at 6:30 p.m. in the parlor. As before, this will be a six-week book discussion group. You can either join in person or online. To register, either contact the church office or turn in the form on the back of this bulletin.



## **SAVE THE DATE - SPRING RETREAT!**

When: Saturday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, from 10 am – 4 pm

Where: Greenwood Village Garden Room in Sagamore Hills

Cost: \$20 freewill offering

Join us for a time of renewal and fellowship! This retreat is designed to provide a sacred space for "THE FIVE R's" - Rest, Reflection, Relaxation, Refreshment and Renewal.

Don't worry, it won't be all seriousness and navel-gazing! There will be time for community and fun, and yes, lunch will be provided (though you can certainly bring your own if you have special dietary needs.) If you'd like to bring a side dish to share you are more than welcome, but it's not a necessity.

Pastor John will lead us, focusing on the practice of meditation, starting with the basics. We'll try out some different meditation techniques and look at some of the ancient sources of meditation in the Eastern and Western traditions.

Please call the office to register, or sign-up after worship on Sundays. We look forward to seeing you there!

Attendance on Sunday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Adults: 83; Kids: 8; Live Stream: 17; Total: 108

# Special Thanks

## FEBRUARY 18, 2024

Head Usher:	<b><i>Volunteer Needed</i></b>
Ushers:	Evelyn Seager Heidi Spangler Jim Duffy
Lay Reader:	
Greeter:	<b><i>Volunteer Needed</i></b>
Counters:	Marge Culver Kathy Pastor
A/V Team:	Fred Pedersen
Flowers:	Carol Miller Pat Rehm
Snack:	Lois Lorenzo
Set Up/Serve:	Carol Miller
Clean Up:	<b><i>Volunteer Needed</i></b>
Snow Herder:	<b><i>Volunteer Needed</i></b>

Thank  
You



## FEBRUARY 25, 2024

Head Usher:	<b><i>Volunteer Needed</i></b>
Ushers:	Evelyn Seager Heidi Spangler Rose Kaval
Lay Reader:	
Greeter:	<b><i>Volunteer Needed</i></b>
Counters:	Marjorie Culver Janet Renovetz
A/V Team:	David Pastor
Flowers:	<b><i>Volunteer Needed</i></b>
Snack:	Jenn Elting
Set Up/Serve:	<b><i>Volunteers Needed</i></b>
Clean Up:	<b><i>Volunteers Needed</i></b>
Snow Herder:	<b><i>Volunteer Needed</i></b>

## 2024 LENTEN Study

I am writing a book. And I invite you to be a part of it by sharing your stories. The book explores a more expansive biblical understanding of salvation. Biblical salvation is not just about what happens after you die. Biblical salvation is something that we can also experience here and now.

Moses sang “God is my strength and my might and has become my *salvation*.”<sup>1</sup> Moses was singing of the salvation that comes when slaves are set free. The Bible is full of references to salvation in this way. To the exile, salvation is about homecoming.<sup>2</sup> To the blind, salvation is sight.<sup>3</sup> To the woman with scoliosis, salvation is standing tall.<sup>4</sup> To the ten lepers, salvation is about healing, restoration to the community and gratitude.<sup>5</sup>

Are you saved? Salvation is about all these experiences and much more. That’s what I want to explore in this book and in this study series.

And I need you to contribute some of your stories too. How have you experienced salvation, not merely as a future hope, but as a lived experience? And, yes, with your permission, I would like to print some of your stories in this book too.

This Lent, there won’t be a book to buy, because it hasn’t been published yet. Heck, much of it hasn’t even been *written* yet. But it is a work in progress and your collaboration in it is essential. I’m excited to hear your thoughts and ideas about this endeavor as it begins to take shape.

If you would like to register, just contact the church office, or fill out this form.

- Pastor John

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### LENTEN STUDY GROUP 2024 — REGISTRATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you like to participate?    ☐ Online    ☐ In Person

How would you like to receive each chapter?    ☐ Electronically    ☐ Print a paper copy

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 15:2

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 62:1, 11

<sup>3</sup> Luke 4:18, John 9

<sup>4</sup> Luke 13:10

<sup>5</sup> Luke 17:11