



THE *Pillar* BRECKSVILLE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

FEBRUARY 2025



Photographed by: Lori Molesky

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

Pastor's Ponderings.....

A group of blind people encountered an elephant for the first time. Each touched a different part, a tusk, a leg, the trunk, and the tail. When the elephant wandered off, they each described their experience:

“An elephant is like a spear,” said the man who touched the tusk.

But others protested.

“No, an elephant is like a tree trunk!”

“No, it’s like a boa constrictor!”

“No, it’s like a rope!”

They argued and fought bitterly, becoming more deeply entrenched in their own perspective. Finally, a wise sage encouraged them to stop arguing and start listening. She taught them to listen carefully to one another. Only then could they understand that the elephant was magnificently more than any one of them could grasp from their own Limited perspective.

Each was genuinely correct; And each was wildly incorrect.

This ancient eastern parable teaches us that we can become passionately entrenched in our own righteousness, but this can lead us down a path of misinformation when we only listen to those who think like us. But listening to diverse perspectives gives us a more complete understanding. That kind of listening to understand may challenge our first assumptions. It can feel disconcerting, yet it leads us closer to what is real.

This is true in politics, families, friendships and church congregations. When we isolate ourselves from any information that might contradict preconceived opinions, we follow a path of willful ignorance. That kind of echo chamber may feel comfortable. It may even strengthen our belief in the veracity of our own opinions. After all, “people are saying...” The solution is to shut down gossip and communicate clearly.

Some avoid direct communication from the feeling that conflict is bad. I believe that conflict itself is neither good nor bad. Conflict is merely an indicator that something needs to change. Our world is changing fast, so is inevitable. What we do with that conflict could lead to horrible destruction. It could also lead to tremendous growth. It all depends on how we communicate.

Conflict can lead us to ask questions, delve deeper into a conversation, and really understand another perspective, another part of the elephant. If we don't take the time to communicate with each other effectively, we will be overwhelmed by conflict.

In Matthew 18:15, Jesus gives us a step-by-step plan to resolve conflicts. The first step is the most important one: "If a fellow believer hurts you, go and talk to them —work it out between the two of you." I am a strong believer in this. I have seen it work miracles. I've shared some of them with you. I have seen Matthew 18:15 bring healing, reconciliation and growth.

Did you ever meet someone who began a conversation by ending the conversation? "No, I don't want to talk to you." Effectively, they are saying, "My perspective is the only one that counts. Don't confuse me with your perspective." They shut themselves down from hearing any voice that could have helped them understand better. This creates a simpler, comforting version of reality, but one that's less likely to be complete. Consider the parable of the elephant.

By communicating clearly and listening to one another with a sincere desire to understand and resolve conflicts, we become a stronger community. The humble disciple listens.

Because this is so pivotal to communal life, our congregation has opened several channels to encourage healthy communication. One of these is the Pastoral Relations Ministry (PRM – also known as PRC). The other is the Human Resources Ministry (HRM).

If you have any concern about pastoral care, the PRM is a cordial, discreet setting to share what is on your mind, be heard, and engage in dialogue toward resolution of your concerns. Please visit <https://brecksvilleucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/asf.pdf> for more information. The PRM is a "best practice" for congregations, recommended by the UCC national offices.

If you have any concerns about a church employee, including the pastor, that are not related to pastoral care, the HRM is the best setting.

We are all learning. But just because I'm the one in the pulpit doesn't mean it's a one way conversation. Some of the most important

lessons I've learned have come through lapses of judgement and constructive criticism. I would love to sit down with you, listen, learn and grow.

Church growth is all about communication. Let's practice healthy communication. Let us speak our truth and listen to one another with clarity, integrity, openness and, above all, kindness.



FROM THE MINISTRIES OF BUCC

FINANCE

For over one hundred years, the Christmas Fund has provided direct financial assistance to retired and active United Church of Christ ministers, church workers, and their families. A check in the amount of \$315 was sent to Living Water Association for this worthy cause. Thank you for your donations.

Called to Care

John 15:12 (NIV) - My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

Do you know of a church member that could use a little extra TLC? Maybe they are ill, injured, have lost a loved one, have lost a job, or are homebound. If so, please notify Pastor John or send a message to Miranda in the church office. We have a group of volunteer members who would love to reach out to those in need with prayer, phone calls, cards, or a visit.

If you would like to join our team, we would love to have you. Just contact Evie Novak at 440-479-9743 or evienovak1@gmail.com or show up at our next meeting on February 5 at 6:30 in the Parlor or on Zoom.

Team	Leader	Additional Members
Card Sending	Kathy Smith	Kate Matthews, Marge Culver, Mark Lehman, Sue Stenzel, Jan Renovetz
Visitation	Mark Lehman	Marge Culver, Kathy Smith, Evie Novak, Robert Petrus, Jan Renovetz, Evelyn Seager
Phone Calls	Evie Novak	Kate Matthews, Robert Petrus, Kathy Smith, Evelyn Seager
Prayer	Robert Petrus	All Available Called to Care Members

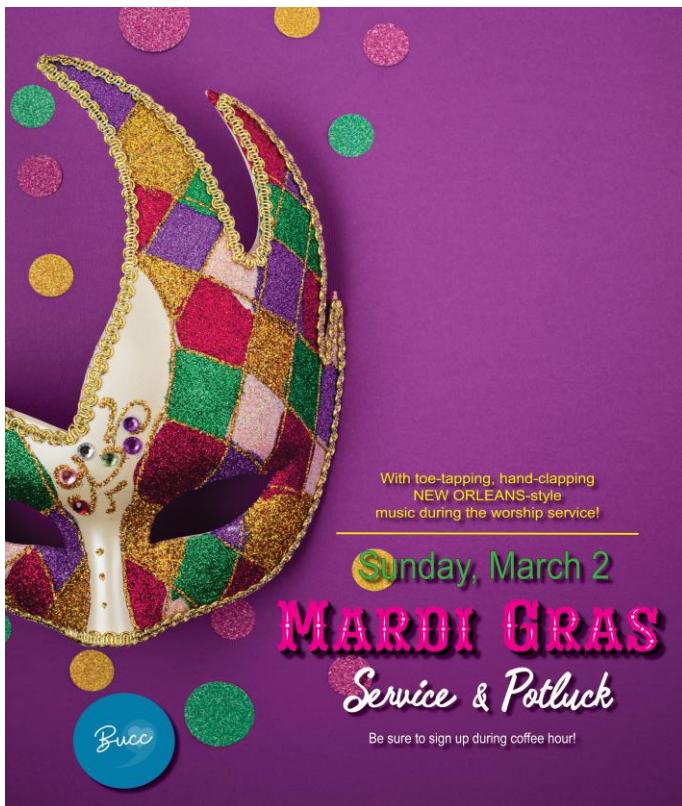
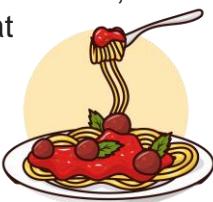
Announcements:



Fellowship Ministry Family Game Night: Mark your calendar for Saturday, February 8th from 6:00-8:00 PM in Fellowship Hall! Bring a snack and a game. Teach us your favorite games or come to learn a new one! Last year we had people playing and/or learning Dominoes, Yahtzee, Cribbage, Racko, Monopoly and many more. It's a fun night for everyone with a little competition thrown in. We will supply

the beverages if you bring a simple snack. Contact Betsey Wilson if you have any questions.

Pasta Dinner- On Sunday February 16, in the afternoon, we are planning a community pasta dinner here at our church. This is a new venture and more information will be forthcoming. If you do want to assist in any way (besides eating the food).... let Armand Eusanio or Diane Gressley. But please mark your calendars and plan to attend. We will be delighted for you to join us.



Sunday March 2 - Mardi Gras Service and Potluck. Enjoy the sounds of a Dixieland Band at our 10 am service immediately followed by our annual Mardi Gras pot luck. More details and a sign up sheet will be available in February.

Announcements:

SOUP SUPPER-Ash Wednesday March 5 - 6:30 pm dinner, 7 pm service in Pilgrim Hall. More details and a sign up sheet will be available in February.



I am so very grateful for all the notes and cards and all the hugs and caring given so generously to me and to my family this past year following the deaths of my daughter Carolyn and my husband George. I also want to shout out a big thank you to Sue Stenzel and her team who worked their magic and at the last moment helped my daughter with the after funeral service gathering. Thank you all; so very much.

Carole Snider and Family.



Transitional Association General Minister Update

We are thrilled to share that by a 99% affirmative vote, we have called The Rev. Dr. Elena Larssen as our Transitional Association General Minister! Our heartfelt thanks to the search team for all the time, prayer and effort given to this process and discerning who God has called to lead, and to Dr. Larssen for her openness, insight and wisdom. We are excited to walk together beginning March 1.

Community Events:

Installation-

Rev. Emily Culp-Ashby
Sunday, February 2, 2pm
Kent UCC
1400 E Main St
Kent, OH 44240

At Church of the Redeemer in Westlake

Church of the Redeemer UCC (23500 Center Ridge Road in Westlake) is inviting you to love your transgender teenage neighbors during the month of February with a read of American Teenager: How Trans Kids are Surviving Hate and Finding Joy in a Turbulent Era by Nico Lang. Find the book at your favorite online or brick-and-mortar bookstore and read it throughout the month. Then, on March 1, join us from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. for a discussion of the book, a light lunch, and a following discussion on how to make our churches more welcoming places for transgender teenagers. Sign up for the book read Contact Rev. Kim Nagy at pastorkim@corucc.org.



Come enjoy British Art Songs performed by Edward Vogel and Mark Murphy Vogel at 4:00 on Saturday, February 1 in the Historic Chapel of The Bath Church UCC (3980 West Bath Road, Akron; 330-666-3520; physically accessible) Free Admission! ASL interpretation!

www.musicatbath.org



St. John's UCC Craft Show- Saturday, March 29th at St. John's UCC Massillon 101 Tremont Ave SE from 9am-3pm

Contact stjohnsuccmassillon@gmail.com or 330-833-5322 to be a vendor!



25th Annual Epiphany Arts Festival at The Bath Church UCC (3980 W. Bath Rd., Akron 44333; 330-666-3520) features 175+ local artists. The non-juried secular Art Show is open to the public beginning Sunday, January 26 displaying photography, sculpture, paintings, jewelry, quilts, ceramics, mixed media & more. Many pieces are for sale. The Festival ends Sunday, February 23 with a Celebration of the Arts concert at 2:00 p.m. uplifting the written word (poetry & literature), aural expression (vocal, handbell & brass choirs), and visual arts. Art Show hours are Sundays 11:30-3, Wednesdays 12-4, Saturdays 10-3. Free admission. Physically accessible. Ample parking.



For more information and more events in our community please sign up for the Living Water Streams of Connection newsletter by visiting-
<https://livingwaterone.org/streamsofconnection/>

FEBRUARY

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

Ian	Stewart	February 02
Fran	King	February 03
Michelina	Fawcett	February 05
Julie	Bernard	February 07
Marjorie	Culver	February 08
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 2025

Sat., FEBRUARY 1

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2

10am Worship Service
11:30 Membership

Mon., FEBRUARY 3

7pm Facilities

Tue., FEBRUARY 4

8:15am "Holy Grounds"
(Brecksville Panera)
6pm AA in Pilgrim Hall
7pm Spiritual Life

Wed., FEBRUARY 5

11am Mindfulness &
Meditation
6:30pm Called to Care

Thu., FEBRUARY 6

5:30pm Youth Choir
6:30pm Music Committee
7pm Adult Choir

Fri., FEBRUARY 7

OFFICE CLOSED

Sat., FEBRUARY 8

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9
10am Worship Service

Mon., FEBRUARY 10

Tue., FEBRUARY 11

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

Wed., FEBRUARY 12

11am Mindfulness &
Meditation
7pm Council

Thu., FEBRUARY 13

5:30pm Youth Choir
7pm Adult Choir

Fri., FEBRUARY 14

OFFICE CLOSED

Sat., FEBRUARY 15

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16

10am Worship Service
12pm Social Justice

Mon., FEBRUARY 17

Tue., FEBRUARY 18
8:15am "Holy Grounds"
(Brecksville Panera)
6pm AA in Pilgrim Hall
7:30pm Communication
and outreach

Wed., FEBRUARY 19

11am Mindfulness &
Meditation
6pm Braver Angels

Thu., FEBRUARY 20

5:30pm Youth Choir
7pm Adult Choir

Fri., FEBRUARY 21
OFFICE CLOSED

Sat., FEBRUARY 22

4pm St. Bridget

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23

10am Worship Service

Mon., FEBRUARY 24

Tue., FEBRUARY 25
10am Worship Service

Wed., FEBRUARY 26
11am Mindfulness &
Meditation
7pm Stewardship
Leadership

Thu., FEBRUARY 27

5:30pm Youth Choir
7pm Adult Choir

Fri., FEBRUARY 28

OFFICE CLOSED

PARTICIPANTS IN WORSHIP

FEBRUARY 2, 2025

Head Usher: Jill Zedan
Ushers: Diane Gressley
Lay Reader: Jenn Elting
Greeter: Kathy Pastor
Counters: Marge Culver
Janet Renovetz
Nursery Asst.: TBD
Acolyte: TBD
A/V: David Pastor
Flowers: Katie Mackeigan King
Snack: Sue Stenzel
Setup/Serve: Carole Snider
Sue Stenzel
Cleanup: Carole Snider
Snow Herder: Nate Elting
Communion: Lois Lorenzo
Bread:

FEBRUARY 9, 2025

Head Usher: TBD
Ushers: TBD
Lay Reader: Diane Gressley
Greeter: Carol Miller
Counters: Marge Culver
Janet Renovetz
Nursery Asst.: TBD
A/V: TBD
Flowers: Sue Stenzel
Snack: Carole Snider
Setup/Serve: Carole Snider
Sue Stenzel
Cleanup: Carole Snider
Snow Herder: Wes Novak

FEBRUARY 16, 2025

Head Usher: TBD
Ushers: TBD
Lay Reader: Rose Kaval
Greeter: Lori Molesky
Counters: Marge Culver
Janet Renovetz
Nursery Asst.: TBD
Acolyte: TBD
A/V: TBD
Flowers: TBD
Snack: TBD
Setup/Serve: Carole Snider
Cleanup: Carole Snider
Snow Herder: TBD
Communion: Lois Lorenzo
Bread:

FEBRUARY 23, 2025

Head Usher: TBD
Ushers: TBD
Lay Reader: Jill Zedan
Greeter: Lori Molesky
Counters: Marge Culver
Janet Renovetz
Nursery Asst.: TBD
A/V: TBD
Flowers: TBD
Snack: Jenn Elting
Setup/Serve: Jenn Elting
Cleanup: TBD
Snow Herder: Wes Novak

The Pillar

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United Church of Christ

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