



1/1/2024

Annual Reports



Brecksville United Church of Christ

Annual Report for 2024

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BRECKSVILLE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST 2024 OFFICERS, MINISTRY MEMBERS & CHAIRPERSONS

MODERATOR : Sherrill Witt
TREASURER: Vincent Kaval
LIBRARIAN: Susan Snyder
RECEPTIONS: Sue Stenzel

ASST. MODERATOR: Evie Novak
CLERK: Gayle Colbert
SCHEDULING: Spiritual Life via Breeze

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

CHAIR: Pat Rehm **CO-CHAIRS OF SUBCOMMITTEES:** Mindy Harris and Leroy Ford

OUR CHURCH'S WIDER MISSION

CO-CHAIRS: Rob Grow and Diane Gressley

FELLOWSHIP (formerly MEMBERSHIP)

CO-CHAIRS: Kathy Smith and Chad Sproul

FACILITIES

CHAIR: Cliff Cribbs

SPIRITUAL LIFE

CHAIR: Betsey Wilson

STEWARDSHIP/LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

CHAIRS: Bridget Sproul (Replaced by Evie Novak 4th quarter)

STAFF/CONGREGATION RELATIONS

CHAIR: Heidi Spangler, first year

***RE-ORGANIZED into**

Human Resources Ministry - Chair - Paul Kuzmins

Pastoral Relations Ministry - Chair - Rose Kaval

FINANCE

CHAIR: Bill Witt

COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH

CHAIR: Jim Duffy

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Church Statistics

I. New Members – 9

Robert Petrus

Bryan Chaikin

Linda Gagnon

Kathy Fagan

Tracey Gibb

Gordon Gibb

Jenny Shankland

Jody Shankland

II. Losses-

Deaths- 5

03-22-2024 - Ann Kelly

04-2024 -Dr. David Ritchey

07-30-2024- Phyllis Hassler

12-2024- George Snider

2024- Betty Einhart

Transfers- 1

Rob Grow

III. Baptisms- 1

Total Members as of 2/1/2024 - 170

Total Members as of 2/1/2025 - 173

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Pastors Report – No Report Provided

Moderator's Report

From the Moderator

I have always considered myself a happy, positive person. These days, I am not so sure. From local issues to our state legislature, to our nation and to the world at large, there are choices being made that show no sense of compassion and concern for those without power or voice, or even for ordinary people, like us, who keep the world going from day to day. I want to look away, but I cannot. Where do we go for respite?

When I come to BUCC I have hope. I see the faces of people with open minds and hearts who are still working on behalf of compassion, care and social justice. People who give their time and talents to our church. People who are holding onto their better selves in an angry world. It's a hard road and we don't always succeed, but I know we always try.

Looking back at 2024, we mourned the passing of several wonderful members of our church community and joyfully received new members. Our member, Rev. Robert Grow, was ordained last year and became Head Pastor at Grace UCC of Loyal Oak.

We welcomed Miranda Lacefield, our new Office Manager/Administrative Assistant, in December, and she is a great addition to the Staff with a strong background in the UCC at all levels. Finance reported a loss for the fiscal year with hope for renewed participation in the new year. Stewardship and Leadership Development faced challenges, but we find ourselves with a full roster of Officers and Ministry Chairs for 2025. Spiritual Life kept us going every Sunday and we had our much-loved outdoor service and picnic at Sagamore Park. The Music Ministry gave us our Cantata, Gospel Sunday, Mardi Gras Sunday, Public Concerts and meaningful weekly music. Social Justice was invigorated last year and has many events planned. And thank you Miss Mindy for our Youth Pageant and your many Kid's programs! We saw the formation of the Human Resources and Pastoral Relations ministries. Communications & Outreach continues to upgrade and improve our streaming and A/V capabilities as our message goes beyond our sanctuary with increases in online viewing. We were at BBH Pride again last year and the event was almost 3 times larger than the prior year. We have much to be proud of as a progressive and welcoming church.

Our church has been and always will be strong in Faith and Spirit. Let us keep our heads up, our hearts open and our hands outstretched for those who may need our support as we navigate the future. With God's help, each of us can make a difference, every day.

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Music Ministry Report

Brecksville UCC's music ministry would not be possible without the dedicated singers and instrumentalists from the congregation who volunteer their time and talents throughout the church year. Many thanks to them for their enthusiastic participation.

The musical highlights of 2024 included Holy Week services and the Christmas cantata. On Palm Sunday the choir sang a rousing anthem by Russell and Joel Nagy titled "His the Scepter" along with the "Sanctus" from Fauré's Requiem; on Easter they sang J. S. Bach's "Awake Thou Wintry Earth" and Annie Herring's "Easter Song." This year's cantata was Together for Christmas, composed and arranged by Pepper Choplin. The choir did an outstanding job learning the music and presenting it on Dec 15, accompanied by Betsey Wilson and Erin Tomlinson on flute, and the multi-talented Steve Ostrow on trumpet, trombone, and violin. On Rally Day the youth choir kicked off the new church season by singing a spirited rendition of "You Are Welcome Here" by Gerard DeMan.

On May 19 we hosted a free concert featuring the Cleveland State University Percussion Ensemble, directed by Luke Rinderknecht. The university transported numerous percussion instruments for the event, including very large marimbas that had to be brought into the building in separate pieces. The student ensemble performed a fascinating program of largely contemporary pieces. The concert was well-attended and well-received. On October 27 we hosted the Chaos String Quartet from the Cleveland Institute of Music. The ensemble performed works by Bach, Haydn, and Grieg. Both concerts were followed by light receptions in Pilgrim Hall, coordinated by Sue Stenzel. These receptions give the audiences an opportunity to meet and congratulate the musicians, and they allow us to demonstrate our church's mission of hospitality and welcome.

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Christian Education

Submitted by Evie Novak

Members: Mindy Harris-Wade, Robin Coyer, Anne Melfo, Susan Snyder, Val Tyler, Nora Gagliano, Amelia Elting and Karen King

While we did not have a chairperson for the Christian Education ministry this year, that did not stop Mindy Harris-Wade, Karen King and Amelia Elting from making the program fun, exciting and educational for our youth. Mindy taught our Pre-K through 4th Grade students, while Karen King taught the 5th Grade and Up class. Amelia continued this year as our Nursery Attendant and pivoted as a classroom helper when there were no students in the nursery. We had approximately 23 students this year, with a weekly attendance of 1 to 15. The children enjoyed the following projects and events in 2024:

Lenten Project for the benefit of Cleveland Food Bank

Annual Easter Egg Hunt with over 500 eggs

Annual Halloween Party

Christmas Pageant

Our thanks to everyone, especially our parents and teachers, for their help in making christian education fun for our children.

Communication & Outreach

Chairperson: Jim Duffy

Members (2024): Full Year - Jenn Elting, Jackie Cassara, Fred Pedersen, Tim Wallis. Partial Year: Allison Colbert & Heidi Spangler.

Our outreach efforts centered around various online media:

- Our website, www.BrecksvilleUCC.org, is where we post news articles and promote our services and other activities. During 2024 we had 9,658 views by 3756 unique visitors (slightly down from 2023).
- Our YouTube Channel, Brecksville United Church of Christ, automatically archives and makes available each week's service.
 - o We have 137 subscribers to the channel (up from 115 in 2023).

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- o Over the course of the year our services were viewed 3,006 times for over 605 hours (views down 17% and hours down 5% from 2023).
- o The most watched video was “Meet Pastor John King” with 91 views.
- o The second most watched video was “BUCC Sunday Worship and Christmas Cantata 15-Dec-2024” with 90 views.
- o The third most watched video was “BUCC Sunday Worship 11-Feb-2024 Mardi Gras” with 77.
- o We have added to our small but dedicated AV team who broadcast our services.
- o To improve the sound of music streamed for our services, we acquired a new omnidirectional microphone to broadcast the choir, thanks to a generous donation from the Duncan Memorial Fund. We are still fine-tuning its use.
- Our Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/BrecksvilleUCC> which we use to promote events has 243 followers, up from 220 in 2023.
- Our Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/buccmembership> which is a “members only” group that we use to communicate with the members of our congregation. The group has 128 members, up from 116 in 2023.

Using the funds from the \$10,000 Church Development and Vitality grant from the UCC Living Waters Association, we engaged with Ideastream Public Media. A 15-second message was shared 14 times on WCLV and WKSU (28 total) each of two weeks in March, one week in September and December. At least one new visitor attended due to these messages.

We also used those funds to engage a local social media firm (Monday Morning Marketing) to promote our events and services on Facebook and LinkedIn.

To reach further out, we helped to promote these “community outreach” events to invite people inside our walls:

- Spring & Fall Music Concerts

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Facilities Ministry

The following are the major repairs and accomplishments of the Facilities Ministry for 2004:

- 1) The front doors of the church were replaced.
- 2) New flooring was installed in Unit A of the rental property.
- 3) Pilgrim Hall flooded and a major cleanup was required. Thanks to our custodian, Sam Alai, for his tireless efforts to get thing back to normal.
- 4) The major exterior drains were cleaned.
- 5) The roof over the rear entrance was replaced.
- 6) Various items that were no longer used were removed from the furnace and the attic rooms.

Fellowship

Events 2024

Our committee does a series of events throughout the year. This year consisted of:

- Mardi Gras potluck in March
- Church picnic along with Spiritual Life committee in August
- Rally day potluck in September
- Game night in October bring a snack and a game and the committee provides drinks
- Thanksgiving potluck in November

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BUCC Finance Ministry Report for Fiscal Year 2024

Submitted by William Witt – Chair

Members: Vince Kaval (Treasurer), Joy Garapic (Financial Secretary), Wes Novak, Fred Pedersen, Bruce McCain, David Pastor, Robert Petrus, Sherrill Witt (Rec. Sec).

The Finance Ministry oversees all ongoing financial reports, including preparing & presenting monthly reports to Council and preparing & presenting the annual BUCC Budget to Council & the Congregation. In addition, responsibilities include monitoring all monies entering & leaving the BUCC bank accounts & the United Church Fund.

Review of the Income Statement ending 12/31/24 shows:

- 1.) Total Income increased \$15,964 vs Budget
- 2.) Operating Deficit increased \$1,263 vs Budget.
- 3.) Rental Income decreased \$922 vs Budget.
- 4.) Net Operating Deficit increased \$2,186 vs Budget.

The higher than average deficit is mostly due to Maintenance & Repair expenses exceeding Budget by \$15,407.

Expense details as follows:

A.) Personnel increased	\$2,198
B.) Office increased	1,776
C.) Utilities increased	630
D.) Maint. & Repair Increased	15,407
E.) Insurance. & Other decreased	739
F.) Internal Ministries decreased	3,720
G.) Ext. Soc. Justice Increased	1,404
H.) Rental Income decreased	922

Review of Financial Assets as follows:

A.) Cash	\$ 21,051
B.) CD's & Treasuries	166,495
C.) Total Financial Assets	<u>193,108</u>
TOTAL	\$ 380,654

Less: Restricted & Escrowed Funds	<u>83,098</u>
Net Assets Available	\$ 297,556

Side note: CD's & Equities Avg. Return **5.75 %**

Past 10 Year Average Net Asset Reserves \$300,000

Human Resources

The Human Resources Ministry was established in October 2024 by Council to strengthen our church's organizational structure and ensure that our staff and volunteer policies align with our mission and values. The ministry has already begun planning important work that will serve our church community in the years to come including (1) Providing HR guidance for church operations (2) Ensuring compliance with relevant employment laws and regulations (3) Supporting staff and volunteers with clear policies and procedures and (4) Establishing best practices for a healthy work environment.

Leadership and Team

The HR Ministry consists of 4 dedicated volunteer members with diverse backgrounds and we will be seeking additional members in the coming year. Current members are Paul Kuzmins, Ministry Chair, Sherrill Witt, Cliff Cribbs and Marge Culver.

2024 Accomplishments

Since our formation, we have successfully hired Miranda Lovelace, the Church's new Office Manager and Administrative Assistant. With her extensive UCC background she has fit in seamlessly and, by all accounts, is doing an amazing job. We also established an internal Panel, the Panel for Accountability & Reconciliation, to review and address an ongoing internal situation.

2025 Goals

To conduct a policy review and updating of:

- The BUCC Employee Handbook
- Staff job descriptions
- Internal performance review policies and procedures

Conclusion

Though newly established, the HR Ministry hopes to become an integral part of our church's administrative structure. We are committed to serving our church family by creating a supportive environment where staff and

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volunteers can thrive in their respective ministries. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve and look forward to continuing this important work in 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul A. Kuzmins, HR Ministry Chair

Social Justice Ministry (Our Church's Wider Mission)

Members: Rob Grow (chair through February 2024), Diane Gressley (chair February 2024-present), Kim Wallis, Julie Bernard, Ann Kelley, John King, Carol Miller, Armand Eusanio, Jeff Thompson, Paul Kuzmins, Dave Shackle, Melanie Falls, Sue Maier, Dan Maier, Claudia Griesemer, Karen King. Thanks to all our members who serve at all our events we sponsor.

We officially changed our name for this group at the beginning of 2024 to Social Justice Ministry. We were able to meet monthly and will continue to meet on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 630 pm via zoom or in the parlor.

The following events and activities were held and sponsored by the SJM members throughout the year:

- Hunger Meals for Brookside Community Center -this ongoing program we have participated in for several years. Each event about 50-80 meals are served.
 - o Sunday March 24 at Bethany UCC
 - o Sunday June 2 at Bethany UCC
 - Note that this church has now closed it doors.
 - o Sunday December 29 at Pearl Road United Methodist
- 5 for 5 church giving – to the wider Living Waters/UCC.org organizations for the following collections:
 - o General Support, One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, Christmas Fund – each of these 5 offerings we send about \$300 - \$500 to Living Waters to use for our church's (UCC) broader missions in the community and the world.

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- Mother's Day – Edna House
 - o Jenny the director came for a continuing testament and an offering was collected with various requested items as well as \$1270
- Advocacy Day in Columbus in May... it is an opportunity to meet with state lawmakers and discuss relevant issues (i. e. Gun Safety). Several people wanted to go but we have not attended since prior to Covid.
- BBH Pride event – Brecksville Broadview Heights Schools on Saturday June 8
 - o Successful booth and attendance at the event
 - o Carol Miller led the team with making Rainbow rocks/swag to hand out to those visitors at the booth.
- Lupita's graduation from COLLEGE – a first for her family. Two years ago as part of the scholarship fund, we held a collection so that her college education would be paid for. She did a facetime/live with us upon her graduation from college.
- Mitten Tree – This ongoing collection on the Christmas tree in the narthex. During the winter months we collect hats, scarves and gloves. Last year we did collect 3 trees worth and as of the end of 2024, the full tree of items will be taken to Colony Cupboard.
- Tree Planting in Metro Parks.... We did our best to make this even happen in the spring (Earth Day/ Arbor Day) but the logistics and timing was not aligned to our availability, but will continue to pursue this into 2025
- Habitat for Humanity – Dan Maier spent some time working with the local leader to understand how we can participate. We can donate tools or help in the Habitat store, but there are always houses that do need work. We did have one work day in 2024 – on November 21, with painting and flooring..... and plan for future work days.
- Colony Cupboard collection – This collection of needed/requested items goes to Brecksville Broadview Heights schools. The initial response from our church is that a carload of much needed items (paper towels, soap, personal hygiene products, etc) were delivered to the school. Kim

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Wallis is in touch with the leaders of the school program and we did hold a second collection at the end of 2024.

- Greater Cleveland Foodbank – had a visit to our ministry by Otto Tyson – director of volunteers. Several of the SJM team also visited and toured the facility at the end of October. We plan to provide volunteer support for various roles at the facility.
- We have a lot of activities planned in the new year. Looking forward to 2025.

Spiritual Life

Members: Allison Colbert, Dave Debick, Peg Duffy, John King, Robert Petrus, Jill Zedan, Betsey Wilson (chair)

Planning the church worship service over the course of a year can seem daunting. This mighty ministry not only forged ahead in 2024 but added some real spiritual dimension and value to the in-sanctuary experience for BUCC congregants. Pastor John encouraged us to consider new ways to accentuate a sermon/season by adding props, decorations and anchor objects to the alter area. Dave Debick deftly selected music that enhanced all areas of the worship experience while adding fresh faces to the choir.

In March we offered a retreat in which twenty-one attendees spent the day learning more about meditation, thanks to Pastor John and member/expert Carol Van Duyne. Guest soloist Angie Lynard led us for Gospel Sunday in April; we tagged-teamed with Fellowship for Worship in the Park/Church Picnic at Sagamore Hills Township Park in August; and held the first annual pet blessing service in October. Author/member Connie Schulz read her newly published children's book "Lola and the Troll" to our kids (and eager adults!)

Dave Debick coordinated two highly successful spring and fall concerts, and the music committee is now meeting the first Thursday of the month before choir for input and inspiration.

Although this was a challenging year for Spiritual Life, we served the congregation to the best of our abilities with open and grateful hearts.

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Stewardship / Leadership Development

Chairperson: Bridget Sproul (thru Oct), Evie Novak (Nov – Jan 2025)

Members: Leroy Ford, Pat Rehm, Carol Miller, Lori Molesky, Sue Maier, Evie Novak, Kate Matthews

The role of Stewardship / Leadership Development is to facilitate the connection of our member's spiritual commitment of time, talent and resources to God's work through our church. Formerly, this ministry was two separate ministries that were combined into one due to their common goals. Our members generally met monthly on the third Wednesday of the month via Zoom.

During the year, Leroy Ford proposed, and council approved, an art hallway to display our member's work. It was later suggested that we might sell donated art as a fund raiser for the church. Mounting strips were ordered and are awaiting installation.

A Called to Care Team was organized to assist Pastor John with outreach to members who might benefit from phone calls, cards, visits and prayers. We recruited four team leaders including Robert Petrus – prayers, Mark Lehman – visits, Kathy Smith – cards, and Evie Novak – phone calls. As Pastor John identifies a member in need of care, he will notify the four team leaders, who then work with their respective teams to fill the need.

Supplies were ordered for the November 2024 Stewardship Drive. Fliers were added to Sunday Bulletins. Our Moderator, Sherrill Witt, prepared and distributed her annual Stewardship letter and pledge cards to members. We can't express enough gratitude for our Stewardship speakers Jackie Cassara, Armand Eusano and Jim Duffy who all agreed to speak, with little notice, and did a wonderful job of sharing their faith journeys with the congregation. The Stewardship Drive resulted in 40 Pledges totaling \$143,090 for 2025, which is almost half of the expenses budgeted. Thank you to all who submitted your pledges. If you have not yet turned yours in, we encourage you to do so.

Beginning mid-year, it was decided that BUCC would receive new members on the second Sunday of every month. On that same day, Leadership Development held a Bridging Group during coffee hour. This group was created to welcome new members and answer questions that

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any members might have relative to our church. A welcome packet was created to provide UCC information, ministry descriptions, giving information, and time & talent sign up opportunities.

Throughout the year, we welcomed many new members into our church ministries. Following resignations and/or illnesses, we recruited new chairpersons, Paul Kuzmins for Human Resources (f/k/a Staff Congregation Relations) and Evie Novak for Stewardship/Leadership Development. Evie Novak and Allison Colbert filled in for the Clerk position beginning in July. Unfortunately, we were unable to fill the Christian Education Chairperson position which remained vacate through the entire year.

Prior to the end of year Leadership Development drive, we updated the ministry descriptions. We emailed our newer members with the ministry list and followed up with them to fill open ministry positions. We also attempted to contact all 2024 ministry members to verify their continued service. As of the end of 2024, we are still attempting to fill the chairperson roles for Christian Education and Stewardship /Leadership Development.

On behalf of Leadership Development, I would like to thank our officers and ministry members for their dedication to this church and its mission. I am especially thankful to those members who sign up for a ministry year after year, without fail. You make our job easier as we know we can count on you. Many thanks also to those who are on multiple ministries. We recognize that your time is precious, and we thank you for giving us so much of it. To our new ministry members, we pray you will be rewarded by your work here. We look forward to working with and getting to know you.

Respectfully submitted,

Evie Novak