



THE *Pillar*  
BRECKSVILLE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

December 2025



Photo by Lori Molesky

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

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

### **Telling the Story Clearly, Living the Story Together**

This time of year draws many of us into gatherings where the stories come easily. Someone says, “Remember when...,” and suddenly we’re filling in the details for one another the way only long-time friends and family can. Those moments remind us that community is held together not just by the memories we carry, but by the way we communicate them—how we speak, how we listen, how we stay connected.

Advent gives us its own version of this. When Mary arrives at Elizabeth’s home, the scene is simple but full of meaning: one speaks, the other responds, and in that exchange both are strengthened. Their shared words become a sanctuary where each is recognized, encouraged, and reminded of God’s work in their lives. And theirs is only part of the picture. The story moves forward through a whole network of voices and visions—an angel announcing, Joseph discerning in a dream, shepherds sharing what they’ve seen. Again and again, God’s love comes close enough to be heard, close enough to be held. Communication isn’t an accessory to the incarnation; it is woven into the very way God draws near.

That same pattern shapes our congregational life. When we say we are an Open and Affirming church, we are describing more than a position—we are naming a practice. Inclusion is expressed in the ways we communicate, how we make space for one another, and how we ensure people have what they need to participate fully.

This is why even something as ordinary as our church calendar matters. An accurate calendar is not simply administrative; it is a sign of our desire to include others and part of the hospitality we extend to one another. When meetings, rehearsals, or events are scheduled or changed, making sure the calendar reflects that helps us stay grounded in clarity rather than confusion.

So I ask all our leaders and ministry teams: Please ensure that the gatherings you are planning appear on the calendar, and let us know when a group is not meeting so it can be removed. These small steps make a real difference in how we live our commitments together.

And another request for all of us: Please take a moment to look at your information in our Breeze system and make sure it's current—especially your photograph. A recent picture helps us learn names, recognize one another, and welcome newer folks into the life of the congregation. It also supports something we all desire: to reach new people, include them fully, and make it easier for them to feel at home among us.

As we move toward Christmas, we remember a God who chooses to communicate love in ways we can see and hear and hold. May our life together echo that same clarity and care in this season and beyond.

Jeff



## FROM THE MINISTRIES OF BUCC

### **Christmas Eve 4:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**

This year, after listening carefully to the congregation's input from our Christmas Eve survey and the thoughtful comments many of you shared, we will be trying something new: our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will begin at 4:00 pm.

The responses we received pointed us in this direction. While 5:00 pm was the strongest preference among the listed options, many people shared that an earlier time would make participation more accessible—because of evening gatherings, winter driving concerns, the needs of children, the pace of the day, or simply wanting space to breathe in the middle of a full season. Several also noted that gathering earlier helps more people of all ages and abilities arrive and return home safely.

Choosing 4:00 pm gives us the chance to worship together while there is still some light, and then move gently into candlelight as the day turns toward evening. It offers flexibility for those whose Christmas Eve traditions happen later in the night, and support for those whose schedules or responsibilities make a later service difficult. Just as importantly, it reflects our ongoing commitment to listen to one another and to choose practices that help the greatest number of us participate fully.

We recognize this is a change from our usual pattern, and we are treating this year as an opportunity to try something new—something shaped by the voices and needs of our community.

We hope it creates room for many in our congregation and the wider community to pause, gather, sing, and receive the promise at the heart of the Christmas story: that Love draws near to us, meets each of us exactly where we are, and welcomes us with grace.

I look forward to sharing Christmas Eve with you.

Jeff

**The Children's Christmas Play** is on Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, during the Sunday Service. Please, bring the whole extended family to participate in a tradition that goes back generations.

**The Christmas Cantata** is an annual tradition at Brecksville UCC. Join us on December 14.



## **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**Mitten Tree-** Please keep an eye out and an open heart for the annual mitten tree that will be in the narthex. Last year we filled the tree over 4 times and the items were delivered to the shelters. Note that scarfs, mittens, gloves and even unopened packages of socks are always needed this time of year.

### **Colony Cupboard for BBH schools**

We are continuing to support the Colony Cupboard! This is a resource for students at Brecksville Broadview Hts. High School who need essentials and school supplies. We donated a trunk full of supplies this summer and plan to make another donation over the holiday's. Based on student needs for the new school year, below is the updated list of supplies they are requesting: Markers, highlighters, binders, graph paper, & headphones. Donations are collected in the back of the church.

**The Christmas Fund** – The Christmas Fund is one of the UCC's special mission offerings. The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. We will hold this special offering on Sunday December 21.



"...WHEN THEY SAW  
THE **STAR**,  
THEY WERE FILLED  
WITH **JOY**..."  
MATTHEW 2:10

**THE CHRISTMAS FUND**

**Donate to The Christmas Fund**

Your care and compassion will make a tangible difference  
in the lives of our ministers, church workers, and their  
families in need.



Donate Online Here!

 UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

[www.christmasfund.org](http://www.christmasfund.org)

 The Pension Boards  
United Church of Christ, Inc.

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## **Pilgrimage: Common Grounds at the Border at Good**

**Shepherd UCC in Arizona** – will be January 12-18 2026. Diane has been helping planning with Plymouth UCC in Shaker Heights and the Heartland Conference and will attend. Check the bulletin board in the narthex for the official flyer. Deadline for registration is December 10. Please reach out to Diane Gressley for further details --- digressley@gmail.com.

**A Shared Table, A Single Loaf-** For generations, our communion table has held the promise that in Christ we are made one body, gathered and nourished by God's grace. In recent years, as gluten-free options became more readily available, we have been able to embody that promise more fully. Beginning in December, the loaf used for communion at Brecksville UCC will be gluten-free.

This change reflects both hospitality and theology. When gluten-free bread was rare, congregations often provided a separate option so that most could partake. But the symbol of "one body, one bread" is most deeply expressed when the whole congregation can share from a single loaf. By preparing a gluten-free loaf for all, no one is set apart, and all may receive from the same table with the same blessing.

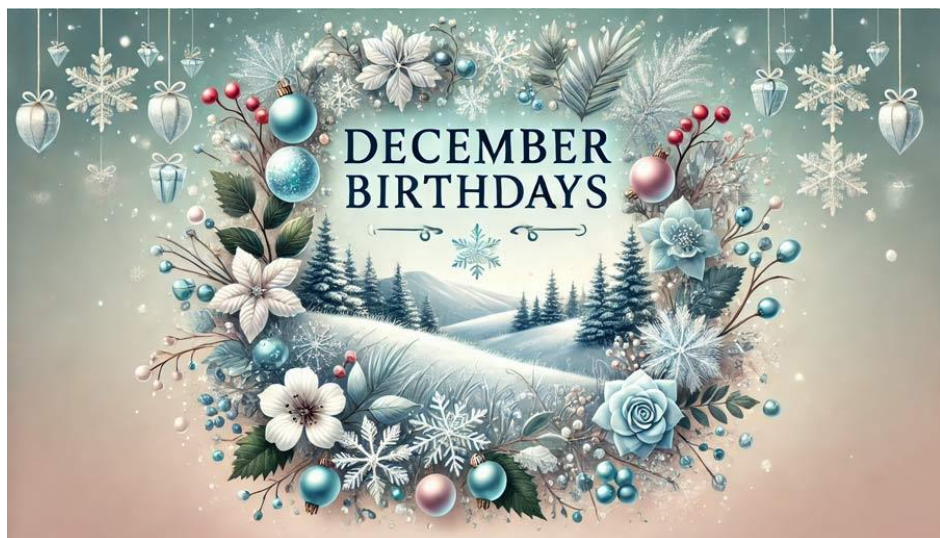
We hope this practice strengthens our shared witness to inclusivity, welcome, and the unity Christ has already given us.

**Thanksgiving Meal:** We would like to extend a huge THANK YOU to the many people who made our 2025 Thanksgiving Sunday a success for the approximately 70 people who attended. Jeff Thompson's employer, Home Depot in Medina, donated the turkeys, and he and his partner Armand Eusano came in at 3:00 AM to cook the turkeys, while a host of people from Fellowship, Spiritual Life and our membership made sure we had beautiful decorations, sufficient side dishes and desserts. Thank you to Jeff and Armand, Joe & Betsey Wilson, Mary Kidd, Carole Snider, Sue Stenzel and everyone else who worked so hard to help us continue this wonderful BUCC shared family event.

**BUCC Annual Congregational Meeting:** Your BUCC Church Council has determined that our Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 11, 2026 immediately after the service. Per our constitution, the meeting is held to “elect officers, to elect Church Council, to confirm ministry appointments, to approve the Annual Budget, and to transact such other business as may come before the meeting”. In lieu of a special extra meeting during December, all members will receive an e-mail of the provisional budget for 2026, as well as the slate of Officers and Ministry Chairs for the upcoming year. Hard copies will be available at the church in December and will be mailed out upon request. It is important that you attend this meeting so that your voice is heard and that we have a proper quorum to conduct church business.

**Your Support for BUCC in 2026:** Sunday, November 16th was Stewardship Sunday and I think we were all caught a little bit by surprise at how quickly this year has gone by! If you have not pledged or gifted yet for 2026, please consider doing so before the end of the year as your financial commitments are critical to any budgeting we do for the upcoming year. There are approximately 50 families and individuals who give ongoing support to BUCC during the church year. We are currently a little more than halfway to our stewardship annual goal. Pledge forms are available at church. Please consider what you can do financially to support BUCC before the end of the year.





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

Jon Thompson - December 4  
Doug Fawcett - December 4  
Kevin Smith - December 6  
Grace Hunt - December 13  
Genny Costanzo - December 20  
Jim Duffy - December 20  
Naomi Klonowski - December 20  
Bob Chandler - December 21  
Lauren Martinez - December 21  
Linda Kriynovich - December 25  
Dan Stewart - December 28  
Amy Coyer-Westerberg - December 29

***\*If we omitted your birthday, sorry about that. Please let us know so we can add you to the BUCC Birthday List!***



# CALENDAR

## 2025

**Mon., DEC 1**

7pm Facilities Ministry

**Tue., DEC 2**

6pm AA in Pilgrim Hall  
7pm Spiritual Life

**Wed., DEC 3**

11am Mindfulness &  
Meditation  
4pm Stewardship  
Leadership

**Thu., DEC 4**

7pm Choir Practice

**Fri., DEC 5**

**\*OFFICE CLOSED\***

**Sat., DEC 6**

**SUNDAY, DEC 7**

*Kids Christmas Play*

10am Worship Service

**Mon., DEC 8**

**Tue., DEC 9**

6pm AA in Pilgrim Hall

**Wed., DEC 10**

11am Mindfulness &  
Meditation  
7pm Council

**Thu., DEC 11**

10:30am Called to Care  
7pm Choir Practice

**Fri., DEC 12**

**\*OFFICE CLOSED\***

**Sat., DEC 13**

**SUNDAY, DEC 14**

*Christmas Cantata*

10am Worship Service

**Mon., DEC 15**

**Tue., DEC 16**

6pm AA in Pilgrim Hall  
7:30pm Communications &  
Outreach

**Wed., DEC 17**

11am Mindfulness &  
Meditation

**Thu., DEC 18**

7pm Choir

**Fri., DEC 19**

6:30pm Brecksville  
Squares

**Sat., DEC 20**

**SUNDAY, DEC 21**

10am Worship Service

**Mon., DEC 22**

**Tues., DEC 23**

6pm AA in Pilgrim Hall

**Wed., DEC 24**

*Christmas Eve*

4 pm Christmas Eve  
Candlelight Service

**Thu., DEC 25**

*Christmas Day*

Office Closed

**Fri., DEC 26**

**\*OFFICE CLOSED\***

**Sat., DEC 27**

**SUNDAY, DEC 28**

10am Sunday Services

**Mon., DEC 29**

**Tue., DEC 30**

6:30pm AA in Pilgrim Hall

**Wed., DEC 31**

11am Mindfulness &  
Meditation

# VOLUNTEERS IN WORSHIP

## **DEC 7, 2025**

Early Usher: Joe Wilson  
Late Usher: Evie Novak  
Greeter: Evie Novak  
Lay Reader: Diane Gressley  
Flowers: Jan Renovetz  
Counters: Kathy Pastor  
Sue Stenzel  
A/V: David Pastor  
Snack: Dave Bernard  
Set up/Serve: Betsey Wilson  
Clean up: TBD  
Communion  
Bread: Gayle Colbert

## **DEC 21, 2025**

Early Usher: Diane Gressley  
Late Usher: TBD  
Greeter: TBD  
Lay Reader: Jill Zedan  
Counters: Sue Stenzel  
Kathy Pastor  
A/V: TBD  
Snack: TBD  
Set up/Serve: TBD  
Clean up: TBD  
Communion  
Bread: Gayle Colbert

## **DEC 14, 2025**

Early Usher: TBD  
Late Usher: TBD  
Greeter: Peg Duffy  
Lay Reader: Jim Duffy  
Counters: Kathy Pastor  
TBD  
A/V: TBD  
Snack: Sue Stenzel  
Set up/Serve: Sue Stenzel  
Clean up: Sue Stenzel

## **DEC 28, 2025**

Early Usher: TBD  
Late Usher: Diane Gressley  
Greeter: Sue Stenzel  
Lay Reader: TBD  
Counters: Sue Stenzel  
Jan Renovetz  
A/V: TBD  
Snack: TBD  
Set up/Serve: TBD  
Clean up: TBD

Can you volunteer?  
Log into Breeze.  
Look for "EVENTS" and  
see what's open.  
Thanks!

# *The Pillar*

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Brecksville United Church of Christ

FIRST CLASS

