

The Good Word

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF BRECKSVILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



I write this to you in a state of utter confusion: *how is it December already?!* Nothing about this year has felt normal, so I guess I shouldn't be surprised that time doesn't make sense. It seems at the same time too soon for December and like this year has been 5 years long.

Yet here we are, in the last month of this crazy year.

The "strangeness of time" seems fitting for this time of year, as we begin Advent and prepare ourselves for the "now but not yet" coming of Christ. Advent is a time when we prepare ourselves for something that both has already happened, and is yet to come. It calls attention to the reality that "Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again" (from our Holy Communion liturgy).

For Advent, we are doing a series called *Those Who Dream*, by the organization Sanctified Art. Everything about this series is beautiful and moving: the Advent wreath readings, the original poems, the Longest Night Service liturgy, the devotional... gorgeous! And at the

same time, it's challenging: it faces the realities of this year head-on. Here's an excerpt from Day 2 of the devotional:

"To begin Advent amid a pandemic and protest is a befitting point of departure for 21st century people of God. We are being reminded that to be the people of God requires an ethical posture of attentiveness, to "keep awake." (Mark 13:37) The text charges us to "keep awake" because we do not know the day or the hour when the fullness of "God with us" will be realized. To keep awake means we are being charged, in the vernacular of Black Lives Matter, to be "woke." Being woke means being aware of, enraged by, and willing to protest in solidarity with the people who are pushed to the margins of society..."

My prayer for us as we journey through Advent is that we use this time to grow deeper in our understanding of how, as the body of Christ, we are charged with being God's hands and feet in this world. That we are to actively participate in

the bringing of God's kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven."

I pray that we will each be open to the Spirit's leading. That doesn't mean we have to agree with everything that is said in the devotional or what others say, but it means we're willing to be uncomfortable and listen for the Spirit's leading and God's dreams for this world.

"As we light the Advent candle of hope, we keep awake by dreaming, by envisioning how we will live out God's promise to be with us. We expect God to be with us and meet us on the others side of this pandemic and protest. For the other side of pandemic and protest is not a return to "normal," it is living the hope of God's continuing revelation of justice." (*Those Who Dream devotional*)

We don't know the day or the hour, but we know that *Christ is coming!*

Happy Advent!

Pastor Heidi

Rev. Heidi Welch, Senior Pastor

WORSHIP WITH US

LIVE ONLINE SUNDAYS AT 9 AM
SERMONS BY PHONE 440-526-0653
WATCH ONLINE ANYTIME - 24/7
COMMUNION 1ST SUNDAY @11 OUTSIDE

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Help us tell God's story as it unfolds in our
church and community.
Send us your news!



We wish you and your family a very Merry and Blessed Christmas! You have been a blessing to many, many people this year through your generosity with Rise Up Against Hunger, Habitat for Humanity, UMCOR, Brookside, and more.

- **Fill the Trees!** We will finish out the year with our traditional **collections of hats, scarves, mittens and for a little 2020 flair – face masks!** Last year donations were amazing so this year we plan to divide the collection between West Side Ecumenical Mission (WSEM), LGBTQ Connection of Cleveland, and The Akron City Schools through the Lebron James Foundation. Please place your purchased or handmade items in the bin inside the parking lot door. We will be collecting through January 10. **Food Tree** – Please place non-perishable food items in the bin inside the parking lot door. Cleaning supplies and personal hygiene items are also needed. We are collecting through January 10 and the church is open mornings Monday – Friday.
- **What's that sound? It's the Salvation Army Bell!** The City of Brecksville has asked our church to help fill the kettle for the Salvation Army, so we have the opportunity to ring the bell on Friday, December 18 from 10am – 6pm at the Broadview Heights Giant Eagle on Route 82 near I-77. Donations to the red kettle stay local, directly impacting the lives of our neighbors by helping them in their time of need. Want to join the team? Please use this link to sign-up for a one hour shift. We have 8 slots to fill! <https://signup.com/go/jKAECWu>
- **Our Christmas Offering** will be divided with half going to the Cleveland Food Bank and half going to Bishop Tracy Malone's Teach * Reach * Bless Initiative. When launching the Teach • Reach • Bless Conference mission initiative, Bishop Tracy S. Malone stated, "My vision is for East Ohio to build an on-campus women's dorm that will provide a safe, secure environment and a community of support, so that female AU students will be able to focus on education without risking their very lives." To date, the Teach • Reach • Bless campaign has raised \$608,462.05 of the \$1.5 million needed to build and furnish a residence hall for female students at Africa University.

Merry Christmas!! - *The Missions and Outreach Committee*

Gifts that Give Twice!

Would you like to avoid some of the "big box" commercialism of the holidays? Interested in shopping locally and supporting small business owners? Want to share gifts that make a difference in the world? You can!

Black Business Week takes place in December



Merry Christmas!

(December 1—8) As part of our commitment to anti-racism, and in an effort to support local businesses, the North Coast District is promoting Black Business Week. During the week of December 1-8, we are encouraged to patronize businesses owned or managed by members of the African-American Community. This is an opportunity to put our East Ohio Conference commitment to anti-racism into action, and a chance to step away from some of the corporate consumerism that so dominates the Christmas season by "going local." The Conference has put together a list of businesses in the Cleveland area (find it [HERE](#) on our website and on social media.) Many of these businesses have online options and gift cards. Please be safe however you choose to do your holiday shopping! If you have any questions, contact Rev. Gerald Cameron at revgeraldcameron@gmail.com or Joy Fenton-Jones at jfentonjones@northcoastdistict.com. Thank you for your support!

Refugee & Immigrant Owned Business Coupon Book



Artisans at Butter Pear

Give the gift of help and hope! US Together Cleveland is introducing a Refugee and Immigrant Owned Business Coupon Book! There has been a lot of hardship in our community this year. We can support and uplift local refugee and immigrant owned businesses and our local economy by buying and gifting this book! Donate \$25 or more and you will receive a coupon book to all the refugee and immigrant owned businesses highlighted. (Places like Algebra Tea House, Mallorca and Butter Pear.) Or donate at least \$10 and receive a US Together bracelet. Click [here](#) or visit this URL: <https://ustogether.networkforgood.com/projects/112211-support-cleveland-s-immigrants-refugees-for-the-holidays#> = Every Wednesday and Friday, US Together Cleveland will share stories and information about the businesses participating in the coupon book. Visit their [Cleveland Blog](#) page, [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#) accounts! They also be share stories from their office every week via email, so you can stay up to date on the important work they are doing. US Together says, "We look forward to sharing the stories of these amazing immigrant and refugee owned businesses, and to have your support during these uncertain times!"



This Christmas Eve will look a little different this year for many reasons. However, one of those reasons is that this Christmas Eve, we will be accompanied by a live orchestra.

The service will begin with a long prelude medley of popular Christmas tunes, including but certainly not limited to:

Mary, Did You Know?

Sleigh Ride

The Holly and the Ivy

Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas

The orchestra will also accompany our carol hymns, which will be sung by soprano soloist Machala Comenschek.

I'm very much looking forward to this new addition to to our Christmas Eve service, and am even more excited for the day that we can gather in person again and hear the orchestra live.

Here is who will be joining us this year - do you recognize any of the names?

Jose Ramirez

Stephen Choi

Laura McLaughlin

Michael Dabney

Valentina Pardo

Victoria Goettel

Alex Numpaque

Connor Van Eps

Stephen Stavnicky

Brandon Thomas

Ben Larson

Evan Spacht

Machala Comenschek

- Malik Khalfani, Director of Music



Disaster Response

Winter Safety Awareness

The East Ohio Disaster Response Committee reminds folks that the best way to respond to hazardous weather is advance preparation. As seasons change, this is a good time to do a few simple things that can make a big difference this winter.

Practice Fire Safety & Prevention:

People will be indoors now more than ever with the colder temperatures and the continuing pandemic. So take action now to protect your home and family by having working smoke detectors in the home, conducting fire drills, change the batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, have auxiliary heating sources serviced, and never leave cooking food unattended.

Prepare Your Home's Exterior:

Remove and cut away low-hanging and dead tree branches to prevent them falling on your home and clean your gutters to prevent snow and ice buildup. .

Prepare Home & Vehicle

Emergency Kits: Winter emergency kits should include flashlights, batteries, blankets, coats, hats, gloves, a battery-operated radio/weather radio, first-aid kit, cell phone and charger, and enough nonperishable food and water to sustain every household member for several days.

Learn more: weathersafety.ohio.gov/WinterSafetyTips

YOUTH MINISTRIES

Advent at Virtual Youth Group

December 6, 13 at 7pm on Zoom

During the month of December we will be celebrating and exploring the season of Advent during Virtual Youth Group! On December 6th we will look at the question **“What is the actual reason for the season?”** and on December 13th we will look deeper into **“Why does my Advent wreath look like that?”** It's going to be a fun and insightful month - and the best part is that any young person can join from anywhere! Do you know a young person in grade 6th-college age who is looking for a supportive community? Reach out to Dana for more info.

Dana's contact info is at the bottom of the page!



Youth Virtual Christmas Party

December 20 at 7pm on Zoom and Instagram

It is an annual tradition that our youth have come to love... The Christmas Bingo Extravaganza! This year, we are getting creative while still holding true to the Christmas Party we know and love. Students in grade 6th-college age are welcome to attend our Virtual Christmas Bingo night for the chance to win prizes, have fellowship, and make memories. Join us for a night of Christmas themed games, Bingo, virtual Christmas caroling, our Ugly Sweater contest, and more! Help Dana plan—RSVP by December 18.

A New Year Blessing for Youth and their Families

(and those Young at Heart)

This has certainly been a year to remember, full of many moments you'd maybe like to forget. When your family looks back on 2020, I hope you remember the moments of togetherness, moments of peace and rest, moments of trying new things, moments of creative problem-solving, and especially, moments of love. May you bring all that you have learned this year into the next and feel God's guiding hand along the way. May the New Year bring more peace, joy, love, and hope to you and yours.

Contact Dana Schwendeman

E-mail youth@brecksvilleumc.com Voicemail 440-526-8938 x 237



@BUMCYouthMin

linktr.ee/bumcyouth



Advent and Christmas SPECIAL SERVICES

Drive In Christmas Pageant and Cheer Parade

Friday, December 18 at 7 pm in the Church Parking Lot

Join us in the church parking lot for a live nativity from the safety and comfort of your car! We'll reenact the Christmas Story and broadcast it to your car radio. Register for a parking space here <https://forms.gle/wGoWCQMgumVPtVZp8> or call or email the church office.

After the service, we'll take a tour of Christmas lights in the neighborhood and honk some good cheer in a Cheer Parade! Help us build a parade route! Nominate a neighborhood light display and we'll add it to the map—which will be available 12/17 and distributed at the service. Call or email the office or use this form <https://forms.gle/5nK324VxjmLobxhu9> *We're making this up as we go along, so watch for more details coming soon!*

Longest Night Services

Monday, December 21 at 7 pm on the church lawn **and** 8 pm streaming online at www.brecksvilleumc.com/streaming

Christmas can be the loneliest time of the year in normal circumstances. This year, we are all grieving. On the winter solstice, when there are more hours of darkness than light, we come together for prayers and laments, to mourn the losses and griefs of the year, to let the tears flow for the hurting places in our own lives, as well as for our country and our world. Known also as "Blue Christmas," this gathering is a safe and sacred space to share anguish, to plead with God to remember us, to pray for justice and restoration, even to hope against hope, through our doubts and tears and fears, "God will set things right all over the earth."

Christmas Eve Family Service

Our children and young people come together to tell the story of Christmas, and share scripture and song. Premiering live on our streaming channels at 5 pm Christmas Eve and available "on demand" on our website starting December 22.

Christmas Eve Carols & Candlelight

Join us online at 7:30 pm for a special pre-service presentation of *The Christmas Eve Prelude*, an orchestral piece arranged and conducted by Malik Khalfani and performed by the Brecksville UMC Orchestra. Our Traditional Service of Carols and Candlelight begins at 8 pm. Get your candles ready to sing *Silent Night!*

this night, we are
**THOSE WHO
DREAM**
christmas eve
Thursday, December 24

The Sundays of Advent

THOSE
WHO
DREAM

November 29 - The First Sunday in Advent

Those who dream... keep awake (hope)

Mark 13:24-37 | Isaiah 64:1-9 | Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Those who dream do not fall asleep to the realities of the world. God prompts us to pay attention to where God's dreams for change and new life are emerging. In Advent, we remember that God's ultimate dream is to be intimately connected to us—to come down and dwell among us. As we keep awake, we join Isaiah and the psalmist in pleading for restoration and for God to draw near.

December 6 - The Second Sunday in Advent

Those who dream... prepare the way (peace)

Mark 1:1-8 | Isaiah 40:1-11 | Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

John the Baptist calls the crowds into the journey of repentance and transformation. Similarly, we are called to prepare the way for God's message of love and liberation to be shouted, heard, and received. Those who dream make way for righteousness and peace to kiss, for faithfulness to spring up from the ground (Ps. 85:10-11).

December 13 - The Third Sunday in Advent

Those who dream... sow joy (joy)

Luke 1:46-55 | Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 | Psalm 126

Ultimately, dreams sow joy, even if that joy doesn't immediately spring forth. Sowing seeds into the soil always feels risky and feeble—how can something so small become something so beautiful, so big, and so nourishing? Like Mary, we are called to tend and nurture the dreams God has woven into us.

December 20 - The Fourth Sunday in Advent

Those who dream... are not alone (love)

Luke 1:26-45 | 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 | Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

This week, we recognize what preceded Mary's song of praise: news that was disorienting and bewildering, possibly threatening her life. Together, Mary and Elizabeth find courage and comfort in spite of their unusual circumstances. We, too, are called to carry, support, and encourage one another's dreams.

December 27 - The First Sunday after Christmas

Those who dream... will not keep silent

Luke 2:22-40 | Isaiah 61:10-62:3

God's dreams are not for us alone. Simeon and Anna could not keep silent—they witnessed Jesus' divine presence in the temple and were compelled to speak up. Like the prophet Isaiah, we will not keep silent and we will not rest until what has been sown will spring up as righteousness and peace in every nation (Is. 61:11-62:2).



Brecksville United Methodist Women's History

This month we are looking in on what was happening in the WSCS (Women's Society of Christian Service) during the 1950s. Here's an excerpt from an undated report:

"This year the circles will be reorganized with two additional daytime circles formed and a new evening circle for the young working gals. We are looking forward to making new friends and starting the year with renewed vigor and vitality.

Our youth chairman, **Ruth Dzomba**, has been a very busy gal this year with her student work. Each quarter she has sent The Upper Room to each of our 44 college students. This year we have 27 students graduating and they will each receive the book *Adventures of Finding God*.

This year we voted to present our Confirmation Class and all future Confirmation Classes with the book *Invitation to Commune* by Charles Roy Goff. This year there were 32 fine young people who joined the church and **Leota** presented each of them with this book.

The past two years have been the busiest years in the history of Brecksville WSCS. Our President, **Leota Hoertz**, has been more than equal to every occasion. She has been a busy gal attending all circle meetings, bazaar workshop and helping every Thursday with Kiwanis dinners. We all thank you."

May our next year be filled with new challenges to keep us alert and busy and may we better serve our church and community. - Submitted by Sharon Judson. Sharon has embarked on a special project to preserve our church history and would love to talk to folks about the history of the church! Reach out to the church office and we will put you in contact with her.



Acme receipts needed!

One easy way to support the UMW Mission Fund is to save your grocery receipts when you shop at Acme. We earn a 5%

donation on certain items purchased at Acme between August 5 and December 26, 2020. Please save your receipts. They can be dropped off in the coat room (on the ground floor of the church) from 9 am to 12 pm Monday through Friday, mailed to the church, or given to Marianne Nolan. In the last campaign we received over \$100 from Acme!

This year's poinsettia sale brings beauty to the Sanctuary, brings Christmas cheer to homes and supports a small, family owned business, Hansen's Greenhouse.

Last day to order is Nov 30!

Suggested donation:

- ___ Single (6 1/2" pot) \$10
- ___ 2 plants (8 1/2" pot) \$17
- ___ 3 plants (10" pot) \$25

Colors available

- ___ Red ___ Pink
- ___ White ___ Marble

Include your dedication (*Limit 180 characters*)

- ___ I'll pick up (week of 12/14)
- ___ Please deliver to me
- ___ Use my flowers in the sanctuary then deliver to someone

Mail payment to BUMC, 65 Public Sq, Brecksville 44141 or pay online <https://onrealm.org/BrecksvilleMethodist/give/Poinsettias>





Share your news with your church family! Contact Melanie:
office@brecksvilleumc.com
 440-526-8938

Karen Schroedel, age 52, has passed away. Her life was filled with service to her community and love for her family. Until her illness, Karen worked as Director of Business Operations at Reaching New Heights, a pediatric speech and occupational therapy practice. A memorial foundation has been established in Karen's name, and all money raised will help children in need get speech or occupational therapy. <https://www.gofundme.com/f/karen-schroedel-memorial-foundation>
 Please join us in surrounding Dave, Brandon and Jenna with prayer.

Or organist, Sean Brown, was recently named a National Merit Scholar semifinalist, one of about 16,000 students selected nationwide for the program. These high school seniors can continue in the competition for about 7,600 National Merit Scholarships awarded next spring. Congratulations, Sean!



Prayer and Praise Notes
 Request prayer through our Prayer Chain. Call the Church Office 440.526.8938 or contact Elinor Rowan at 440.230.1540 or email rowanel33@gmail.com



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Allen McCrodden	1	Scott Schneider	10	J. Donald Moorhead	19
Jack Burrows	2	David Schroedel	10	Nathan Petznick	19
Dave Dobos	2	Joseph Welch	10	Hudson Schneider	20
Sue Ellenberger	2	Thomas Aldridge	11	Carol Dambaugh	21
Marisol Wylie	2	Barb Berry	11	Megan Louttit	21
Ronnie Rajkovich	3	Amy Piorkowski	11	Amanda Bianchi	23
Ed Crist	4	Greg Urso	11	Logan Hricko	25
Malik Khalfani	4	Mitchell Bell	12	Erin Kapaigorodsky	25
Nick Mihalich	4	Penny Burns	12	Kayla Kosla	26
Carter Barnum	5	Steve Piorkowski	12	Elliott Thorson	26
Diane Ellis	5	Doug Ritterbusch	12	Anastasia Brachna	28
Kate Krause	5	Trinity Crouch	13	David Brown	28
Bruce McCrodden	6	Kiira Olszko	13	Christine Drescher	29
Mike Memmer	6	Shirley Harper	14	Sylvia Fowler	29
Katie Pasek	6	Sydney Hazelton	15	Brandon Schroedel	29
Joyce Rossborough	6	Ruth Moorhead	15	Mary Lou Bennett	30
Steve Harper	8	Dale Meyer	16	Darell Fisher	30
Vivian Bielinski	9	John Jatsek	17	Todd Fowler	30
Rita Brown	9	Elinor Rowan	17	Bob Jaite	30
Dick Gordon	9			Connor Hulten	31
Charles Helm	9			John Scott	31
Joyce Johnson	9			Hadley Spencer	31
Daniel Soltis	9				





As people of faith, we find God's presence in those who have been blessings to us. At our weekly staff meetings prayers of thanks are lifted to God for the way lives are touched when we reach out to one another in service. People like Don Krolkowski whose gifts are invaluable in helping us communicate the ministries of this church.

Our Gopher Team, who took on the big task of delivering about 230 Advent Kits to doorsteps in our community. Marla Knight, who just joined the closer team, along with Aleya Gee Gambone. Thankful for you two! And Mark and Lynn Spencer and Bob Snyderwine who were so helpful with the Stewardship Boxes. It is wonderful to be serving together in so many ways, each sharing gifts that help the work of the church!

December

BRECKSVILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>29—Keep Awake 9 Worship 10 Coffee Hour 10:30 Art of Christmas 11-12:30 Kids Connect 7 Dinner by Candle 7 Youth Group</p>	<p>30 <i>The Church Office is open on Mondays from 9—12:30 am</i></p>	<p>1 7 Lectio Divina</p>	<p>2 7:30 Dawnbreakers 10 Lectio Divina</p>	<p>3 10 Staff Mtg 6 Non-Violence Grp</p>	<p>4 <i>If it's paper, bring it to the bin! Our recycling bins are emptied on Thursday mornings.</i></p>	<p>5 <i>Bread Ministry</i></p>
<p>6—Prepare The Way 9 Worship 10 Coffee Hour 10:30 Art of Christmas 11-12:30 Kids Con. 7 Dinner by Candle 7 Youth Group</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8 7 Lectio Divina 7 Inclusion Task Force</p>	<p>9 7:30 Dawnbreakers 10 Lectio Divina</p>	<p>10 10 Staff Mtg 6 Non-Violence Grp</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>12 <i>Bread Ministry</i></p>
<p>13—Sow Joy 9 Worship 10 Coffee Hour 10:30 Art of Christmas 11-12:30 Kids Con 7 Dinner by Candle 7 Youth Group</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15 7 Lectio Divina 7:30 Trustees</p>	<p>16 7:30 Dawnbreakers 10 Lectio Divina</p>	<p>17 10 Staff Mtg 6 Non-Violence Grp <i>January Good Word Deadline!</i></p>	<p>18 BUMC Rings the Bell for Salvation Army 10—6 7 Drive In Nativity Pageant</p>	<p>19 <i>Bread Ministry</i></p>
<p>20—Are Not Alone 9 Worship 10 Coffee Hour 10:30 Art Christmas 11-12:30 Kids Con 7 Dinner by Candle 7 Youth Party</p>	<p>21 Longest Night Worship Service 7—Outside 8—Online</p>	<p>22 7 Lectio Divina</p>	<p>23 7:30 Dawnbreakers 10 Lectio Divina</p>	<p>24 Christmas Eve Online 5 Family Service 7:30 Orchestra 8 Carols & Candlelight</p>	<p>25 </p>	<p>26 <i>Bread Ministry</i></p>
<p>27—Will Not Keep Silent 9 Worship 10 Coffee Hour 10:30 Art of Christmas 11-12:30 Kids Con 7 Dinner by Candle</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30 7:30 Dawnbreakers</p>	<p>31 </p>	<p>Reminder: To be credited to your 2020 giving, gifts must be received in the church office by Thursday, December 31. The church office is open on Monday, 12/28 from 9—12:30 am. But online giving is always available through this link: www.onrealm.org/BrecksvilleMethodist/Give</p>	

We encourage everyone to stay home and ***help stop the spread***, but realize that there may be times that you need to visit the church office.

Please call 440-526-8938 or email
office@brecksvilleumc.com



Socialize with us!



Open Doors.
*Welcoming all
of God's children.*

Brecksville United Methodist Church is called to the ministry of reconciliation. We embrace diversity as a gift. We celebrate our human family's diversity of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, age, faith history, economic status, marital status, physical and mental ability, and education. We affirm that all people are created in the image of God and as beloved children of God, all are worthy of God's love and grace. We welcome the full inclusion of all people in the life and ministries of Brecksville United Methodist Church as we journey toward reconciliation through Christ.

Holiday Music Out of Key: When Songs Become Sad

by Eleanor

My Christmas season starts with a quiet tradition; it's one I picked up from my mother although it was never officially passed down. It doesn't commence after devouring my last piece of Thanksgiving pie or walking through the doors of Target at midnight on Black Friday; it starts when I get out my tattered copy of the Big Book of Christmas Songs and sit down at the piano and play from *Angels We Have Heard on High* to *Silent Night* and every carol in between.

This piano book is my favorite to play; partly because I'm not all that good and most of the songs are so familiar I can fake my way through. But mostly because playing the piano soothes me and allows me to reflect on the past, present and future. Christmas songs, which are ingrained with nostalgia and memory, are especially prone to send me back to a time when our hearts truly seemed light.

'*The first noel the angels did say...*' and I'm standing in our church one December morning. My family is spread out over two pews, singing the hymn's harmonies just a bit too loud. My overly concerned and self-aware family is cautious to never do anything that might be considered showy or obnoxious, except where a harmony line is involved.

'*Away in a manger no crib for a bed...*,' and I'm listening to the timid and slightly off pitch crooning of a child's Christmas pageant. My mother, the director of the children's choir, is sitting in front of the singers mouthing the words as a sea of charmed parents sit behind her smiling lovingly.

'*There's a song in the air! There's a star in the sky!*' and I'm surrounded by my mother and her teary eyed siblings as they sing their deceased mother's favorite Christmas song. I'm unsure of the words or why my aunts and uncles are sad, but I know the moment is important.

'*Silent night, holy night...*,' and I'm choking through the song's familiar the words at our church candle light service the year we found out my mother was sick. Fast forward a year and I'm singing with my family in a dim room around a brightly lit Christmas tree on Christmas Eve; each of us wondering how the absence of someone could be so felt so fully.

I had a hard time with Christmas songs in the year or

two after my mother died. A few notes of Judy Garland's *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* or Bing Crosby's *Silent Night* and I was done; a grief side-effect that hardly seemed fair because these were the songs closest to my heart.

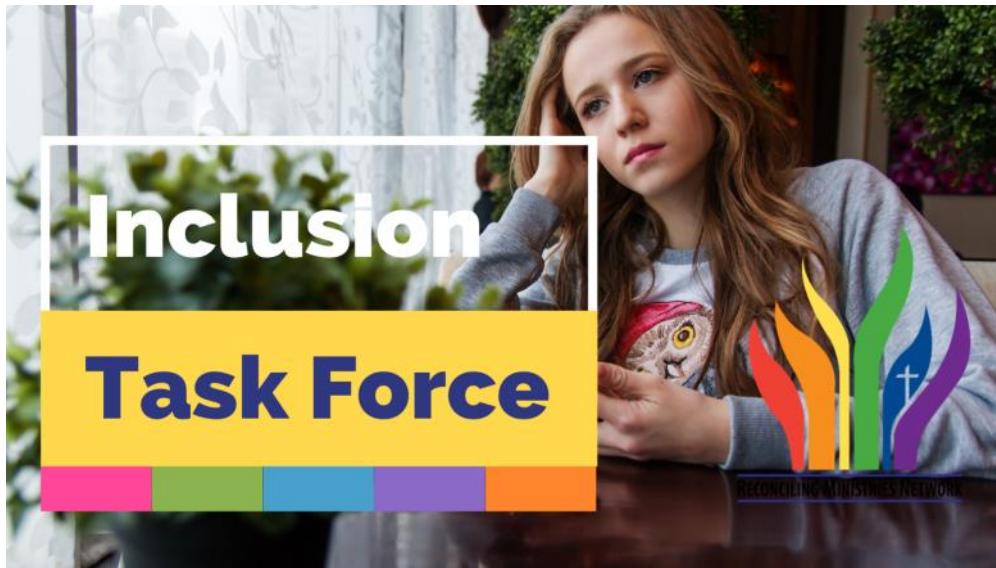
Sometimes the only way I can conceptualize the holidays in the year or two after the death of a loved is to think of it like a film negative; everything is opposite. Happy is sad and where we're used to being filled up with the love and warmth of the holidays, we're now filled with a well of sadness that bubbles over and erupts into tears at the most unexpected and inconvenient of times.

When you're grieving, small yet tender reminders like *I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas* and *Hanukkah Oh Hanukkah* can shock you and rub you where you're already raw. As if death hasn't stolen enough from you already, it greedily takes your ability to enjoy a song you've loved for years and sadly I don't have anything constructive to offer about this other than to say, I understand.

I see you paralyzed in the middle of your shopping because '*O Holy Night*' has begun playing over the stereo. I see you crying in church because you've just turned to this morning's hymns and realized it's '*O Little Town of Bethlehem*'. I see you looking sullen at the office holiday part because '*Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree*' is playing and you used to love the song but now it makes you want to scream. I get it. Actually a lot of people get it. You aren't alone.

In the 8 years since my mother's death these songs have recovered many of their positive qualities, but catch me on the wrong day and they still have the potential to grip my heart and bring me to tears. Except years later the tears are a mix of happy and sad emotion; they are happiness with a twist. My hope is that at the very least you will someday feel this melancholy fondness (if you don't already) and as the song goes, until then you'll, "*...have to muddle through somehow.*"

Shared by Cornerstone of Hope, a bereavement center in Independence, serving children and adults who have been affected by loss. For more information about their programs and services, please call 216-524-HOPE.



I'll have a blue Christmas without you.... Do you imagine this being sung by Elvis or Porky Pig? Half of us could debate. The other half of us have no idea what I'm talking about. Young people grew up without this classic Warner Brother's character. The cultural differences between generations may be vast, but we have more in common. People are people, no matter what year they were born.

Christmas brings up a lot of emotions for many people. Especially if we have experienced a loss. We can experience grief during the holidays because we aren't with our loved ones. We might be longing for the family we always wished for. Even reminiscing about holidays with that special person that has passed can make us feel blue. This is something we all experience, no matter how old we are.

This is especially true for LGBTQ youth during the holidays. They are frequently kicked out of their homes. With no home and no family, LGBTQ youth face depression, hopelessness and grief. According to the Trevor Project, LGBTQ youth are four times more likely than their peers to contemplate suicide. This holiday season I ask all of you to pray for the LGBTQ community, that they may find a home that is loving and accepting. To everyone feeling lonely or sad during the holidays know that there are people who love you and remember that the people at BUMC are here to support you.

I personally have experienced the loss of loved ones. This caused depression, hopelessness and grief as well. I use this experience to try and have empathy for others that feel loss. I'm sure many of you know what grief feels like. I ask you to tap into that feeling and transform it into compassion for the younger generation that is really struggling right now. Please visit lgbtcleveland.org. They have tons of resources and links. They have opportunities for allies to support LGBTQ people of any age. There are also several crisis hotlines listed on their website. If you or anyone you know is in crisis and need help, please call one of these hotlines. If you prefer, you can text the Cleveland Mobile Crisis by texting "GO" to 741-741. - Submitted by Tracy Adanich



Our Care & Prayer Mail Project is spreading cheer, one message of care, and of prayer, at a time. We are surrounding one person or family in prayer each week and it's been wonderful! And you can be a part of it!

Week of December 6

Gladys Smith

7005 Stadium Dr Apt 408
Brecksville, OH 44141-1887

Week of December 13

Phyllis Phillips

7005 Stadium Dr Apt 106
Brecksville, OH 44141-1895

Week of December 20

Janet Patterson

7005 Stadium Dr Apt 416
Brecksville, OH 44141-1887

Week of December 27

Barbara Ramundo

7005 Stadium Dr. Apt 422
Brecksville, OH 44141

Pastor Barbara says, "Be a blessing for those in our church family you may not see on Zoom or at the grocery store. They will be thrilled to hear from you. Thanks for being loving, caring people of Christ!"

*Check back next month
for a new list!*