On December 18, our kids experienced Christmas Around the World—in Fellowship Hall! How do our brothers and sisters in Poland, Russia, England, Mexico, Germany, Sweden, Italy, and the Philippines celebrate this most holy day? What do they eat? What traditions originated in these countries that we use in our own homes today? The kids learned the answers to these questions and more with crafts and activities presented by our education committee, with the help of our high school students. At each station, the kids earned a stamp in their Christmas Passport. A great time was had by all!

Photos from top: The Mexico table offered a chance to see the sights and colors of a Mexican celebration complete with a taste of Rosca de Reyes bread, traditional Mexican spiced punch and the tale of the poinsettia plant. Once the “travelers” made the craft and tasted the food from the table they earned a stamp in their passport.

Nativity scenes (known as Presepios in Italian) are an important part of their Christmas celebration. Christmas parades in Italy have carolers going through the streets carrying lit torches in honor of the shepherds from the first Christmas Eve.

On Christmas Eve in Russia the family gathers around the table to honor the coming Christ Child. A white table cloth, symbolic of Christ’s swaddling clothes, covers the table. Hay is placed as a reminder of where Jesus was born. A white pillar candle is placed in the center of the table, symbolic of Christ as the light of the world.

The Advent calendar began in Germany.

The festival of St Lucia’s light is a huge part of the Christmas season celebration in Sweden. Boys wear pointed hats with stars and girls wear wreaths with candles in processions.

Thank you Germany, for the tradition of Christmas trees and gingerbread. Yum!
Someone once asked Perle Mesta, the great Washington hostess, the secret of her success in getting so many rich and famous people to attend her parties. She said it was all in the greetings and goodbyes. As each guest arrived she met him or her with: “At last you’re here!” And as each left she expressed her regrets with: “I’m sorry you have to leave so soon!”

We enter yet another year. I believe that there is a lot to be said of greetings and goodbyes. How do we greet the coming year? Can we see it as full of possibilities? Or, is it just like any other year, nothing special, heads down we’ll just trudge through it no matter what it brings? Our attitudes can help set the table for spectacular things. They can also hold us back from attaining all the good things available to us at any one time.

One only need look to the letters of Paul to recognize the importance of greetings and goodbyes. If you have some time, look at them. Paul recognized the potential in God’s children. He wrote to help keep them together and on task. He answered questions, made promises for future visits, and called the community to accountability. When he reached the end, he wrote endearing, God praising goodbyes.

We greet another year together. I am ever grateful for the potential for God to meet us in new ways at Brecksville United Methodist Church. I am ever grateful for the potential for God to meet us in new people at Brecksville UMC. I am amazed at the ongoing work of the spirit in this place. I greet the New Year among you with joy. I say goodbye to the year past praising God for time well spent. May we pay close attention to our hellos and goodbyes. They matter.

Peace for the day,

Comments from Rev. Clark Stein

In January the Mission Board will be hosting coffee each Sunday morning. Come to The Parlor between services for fellowship and to learn more about this ministry.

Monday Night Bible Study resumes January 16. Facilitated by Les Buttolph, the study group meets in The Parlor at 7 pm. Join us!
**Serving in Love!**

Because of the great success of this year’s cherry cobbler and pie sales at Fair on the Square and other fundraisers, the UMW has been able to meet their 2011 mission fund goals AND have purchased twenty round table cloths ....ten pink and ten beige....from L-Nique. Thank you to everyone who supported UMW fund raising projects throughout the year!

**Hat and Mitten Tree Totals**

- 112 Sets of Gloves and Mittens
- 58 Hats
- 20 Scarves
- 10 Teddy Bears
- Assorted Toiletries

**For the Parma Heights Food Pantry**

**Dear Church Family,**

Thank you for all the pajamas and books you donated. Together, our church raised 50 pairs of pajamas and 52 books! We’re so glad that lots of less fortunate kids will get a nice Christmas present this year. Thanks again! Love, The 3rd, 4th, and 5th Grade Challenge Classes at the Brecksville Broadview Heights Schools.

**Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!**

Thank you, thank you, thank you from the Brecksville United Methodist Women, Greater Cleveland Church Women United, and Domestic Abuse and Child Advocacy. Your generous outpouring of gifts was overwhelming and heart-warming. We are truly filled with the spirit!

**Family Puppet Show**

December 30 at 7:00 p.m.

The Fumbly, Bumbly Angels

*On the BUMC Fellowship Hall Stage!*

Presented in black light by the youth of the North Royalton United Methodist Church. You will delight in this story of four charming angels who yearn to sing in the glorious heavenly choir. Be with them as they learn that their first audience will be a few ragged shepherds on the Bethlehem hillside. You will definitely enjoy this sweet perspective about the angels that visited the stable on the night of Jesus' birth. Hot chocolate and cookies will be served at the end of the performance.

**Community Breakfast**

Come on down for a winter warm up with your family and friends! BUMC will open the doors on January 28 from 7 – 10 am for a Southern Cookin’ Full - Hot - Homestyle Community Breakfast hosted by the Evangelism Committee. Tell your neighbors to join BUMC in living out the mission statement of Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors. Eggs, bacon, sausage, grits and potatoes along with juices and coffee will be served. Cost is free, but donations will be accepted. Don’t miss it!
On Monday December 12 Nell and I were doing some unpacking (can you believe?), when we thought we heard the angels singing. We opened the front door and indeed it was the angels of BUMC choir and friends including Clark and Kathy Stein, who were singing Christmas carols, their faces beaming. What a joy! They came in and we sang more carols together. We were so moved that I had to struggle to keep tears from flowing. They gave us a package to open. It was one of Les Buttolph’s wonderful clocks made from the communion rail, pew supports, the pulpit which held my sermon notes, and upon which I leaned forward when I made a point. The clock chimes on every quarter hour, reminding us of Brecksville Church every time. Few ministers are so blessed to serve such a loving congregation.

Thank you all so very much,
Nell & Tom Taylor

As people of faith, we find God’s presence in those who have been blessings to us. At our weekly Staff Meetings, we have recently lifted up the following people in prayer, thanking God for them and the way they touch the lives of others: Look around BUMC and you might hear Mallory Krolikowski sharing beautiful music, Catherine Vastartis and the Evangelism Committee welcoming everyone to our church after the Brecksville Christmas Parade, George Gee assisting churchgoers in our parking lot ministry, or Marisol Wylie beautifying the church with her artistic talents. We are thankful for each of you!

Kevin Schultz 01/01 Lois Moston 01/16
Katherine Cline 01/02 Aundrea Dumot 01/17
Susan Loughner 01/02 Eliot Slifcak 01/17
Elizabeth Bellingham 01/03 Kim Johnson 01/18
Michael Patrick 01/03 Fred Loeffler 01/18
Michelle Shively 01/03 Ellen Martin 01/18
Emily Vincent 01/03 Jennifer Schneider 01/18
Beryl Burke 01/04 Jessica Zawada 01/18
Donna Sibits 01/04 Nathan Bender 01/20
Kaya Roberts 01/05 Kaitlyn Ellis 01/20
Nathan Machesky 01/06 Brian Meek 01/20
Claudia Monnett 01/06 Jeanne Ross 01/20
Margie Benedict 01/07 Daniel Auble 01/21
Cole Mihalich 01/09 Patricia Gordon 01/21
David Vastartis 01/09 Robert Nelson 01/22
James Vastartis 01/09 Jaclyn Hollo 01/23
Nathaniel Hulten 01/10 Emily Loughner 01/24
Geraldine Mcmaster 01/11 Robert Lundholm 01/24
Marc Vincent 01/11 Catherine Servey 01/24
Robert Carson 01/12 Colin Crouch 01/25
Shelly Meek 01/12 Katherine Hurder 01/25
Jennifer Hoffman 01/13 Susan Hastings 01/26
Diana Warth 01/13 Nicholas Campbell 01/28
Steven Chen 01/14 Kimberly Cave 01/28
Madelyn McBride 01/14 Donna Culley 01/28
Joy Fenton 01/15 Susan Monseau 01/28
J. Scott Ford 01/15 Jill Magistro 01/30
Donna Houston 01/15 Donald Salsbury 01/30
Marianne Nolan 01/15 Kathy Goebel 01/31
Sam Papp 01/15 DJ Magee 01/31
Looking for ways to "Serve in Love"?

Then come to the Volunteer/Mission Fair on Sunday, January 8 from 9:30 to 1PM. We have representatives from many organizations that are excited to offer many opportunities for all ages to volunteer. If you are unable to commit to volunteering, then simply come and learn more about the organizations that serve our community.

Council on Ministries

Missions Giving for 2011

Our church donates generously to mission programs through our Conference Apportionment, which includes donations from individuals towards hunger programs, UMCOR, as well as specific areas like the Haiti and Japan relief efforts. This past year, the Missions budget allocation was $7500. Here is how that money was spent:

Brooklyn Memorial/Pearl Rd Church community outreach dinners $ 431
Russian Orphanage Missionary support $1,000
Nothing But Nets $ 250
Kairos Prison Ministry $ 819
Berea Children's Home $1,000
West Side Ecumenical Ministry $1,000
Hunger Network $ 500
Cleveland Foodbank $ 500
Wesleyan Senior Living $1,000
Cornerstone of Hope $ 500
UMCOR $ 500
Total $7,500

It's CHILI TIME! January 21 is the date for this year’s UMM Annual Chili Cook Off! Don’t miss this opportunity to enjoy some tasty chili or to share your favorite recipe! Don’t miss it! Sign up in the Parlor!

Can we make our numbers grow? Why not bring a friend to church or Sunday School?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>1st Service Attendance</th>
<th>Sunday School</th>
<th>2nd Service Attendance</th>
<th>Offering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 27</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>$7,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 4</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>$14,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 11</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>$11,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 18</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>$14,494</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; Psalm 24:1

The Parma Heights Food Pantry sets aside an area for clothing for those going on job interviews or starting a new job. As you are cleaning out your closets this month, why not donate to this effort? From January 8 through January 22, bring your gently used work clothes to the Fellowship Hall Stage for our BUMC Career Clothing Drive! At the conclusion of the drive, we'll deliver your donations to the Food Pantry to help those getting a fresh start in the new year!

2011 Paper Recycling

A year ago, we started weighing our paper each time we took it for recycling. Those old bulletins, office paper, and catalogs really add up! In the course of one year, we recycled 1353.5 pounds of paper, saving the equivalent of 8.5 mature trees or 3500 gallons of water or 1.5 cubic yards of landfill space or 1 barrel of oil or 2050 kilowatt-hours of electricity! Thank you for helping us be good stewards of God’s resources by putting paper into the blue bins at the church!
Book Study
The Starfish and The Spider
by Rod Beckstrom and Ori Brafman
Facilitated by Mike Kubek and Les Buttolph

If you cut off a spider’s head, it dies; but if you cut off a starfish’s leg, it grows a new one, and that leg can grow into an entirely new starfish. Traditional top down organizations are like spiders, but now starfish organizations are changing the face of business and the world. What’s the hidden power behind the success of Wikipedia, Craigslist, and Skype? What do eBay and General Electric have in common with the abolitionist and women’s rights movements? What fundamental choice put General Motors and Toyota on vastly different paths? How do these concepts apply to our lives as Christians? How can these principles enhance our relationship with God and increase the health of our church?

This class will explore the qualities of starfish organizations, why they are successful, and what vulnerabilities could severely weaken or cripple them. The goal of the class is to empower the group to recognize the importance of every member of the church as a whole, and recognize how each one of us is responsible for its success.

Video Class, Drop Ins Welcome
“Chariots of Fire”
Facilitated by Bob Carson & Matt Auble

'He that honors me, I will honor.' 1 Samuel 2:30

Chariots of Fire is a 1981 Academy award winning British film that tells the fact-based story of two athletes in the 1924 Olympics: Eric Liddell, a devout Scottish Christian who runs for the glory of God, and Harold Abrahams, an English Jew who runs to overcome prejudice. It was nominated for seven Academy Awards and won four, including Best Picture. Join us as we watch the movie and discuss whether the ideals of Eric Liddell are still relevant today. Can we live in modern society and honor God in all that we do?

Bible Study
The Essential 100: A Bible Reading Plan
Facilitated by Jenny Gee

Have you thought about making a New Year’s Resolution this year? Often when we do we immediately plan on making some health adjustments; whether through improved diet, more exercise or better rest. What about your spiritual health? Have you considered resolving to improve your meditative or prayer life?

Join me as we embark on a journey through the Bible. We will make our way through a carefully selected list of short Bible passages – 50 from the Old Testament and 50 from the New Testament. Most are about 1 or 2 chapters in length, just the right amount for a busy person to read in a few minutes. The readings cover all major types of biblical writing, including the History Books, Poetry, Wisdom, the Prophets, the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles and Revelation.

Whether you are new to reading the Bible or if you have been reading it for years, you will find this challenge a great way to get an overview of the Bible’s message.
Music in the Valley
A benefit event in support of the concert/recital series at Brecksville United Methodist Church

You are invited to a formal evening aboard the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (A great idea for Valentine’s Day!!)

Saturday, February 11, 2012
7:00 – 10:00 o’clock pm

Tickets will be available after both hours of worship on Sunday mornings in January.
Or you may reserve your tickets by calling the main church office at 440.526.8938.

Tickets are $75 per person and include…
※ Heavy hors d’oeuvre dinner buffet
※ Open bar
※ Gourmet dessert selection
※ Silent auction items
※ Door prizes
※ Complimentary in-home babysitting (available by request)

Our privately chartered train will depart at 7:00pm from the Brecksville Station located at Station Road.
Space is limited! We truly hope you will join us!

Particular physical needs can be accommodated.
Please alert the office when you make your reservation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sun</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tue</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thu</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10  Worship</td>
<td>Happy New Year! Church Offices Closed</td>
<td>11 Staff Meeting and UM Staff Appreciation Luncheon 7 Knitting Grp</td>
<td>6:30 Dawnbrkers</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 Emmaus 9 Men’s Bible Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45 Worship 10 Education Hr 11:15 Worship</td>
<td>7 Bible Study</td>
<td>9:30 Staff Mtg 7 Knitting Grp 7:30 Finance 7:30 Trustees</td>
<td>6:30 Dawnbrkers 3:30 CMAP 7 SPR</td>
<td>10 History Grp 6:15 Bells 6:15 HS Ensem 7:30 Choir</td>
<td>7 Emmaus 9 Men’s Bible Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45 Worship 10 Education Hr 11:15 Worship</td>
<td>7 Bible Study</td>
<td>9:30 Staff Mtg</td>
<td>6:30 Dawnbrkers 3:30 CMAP</td>
<td>6:15 Bells 6:15 HS Ensem 7:30 Choir</td>
<td>7 Emmaus 9 Men’s Bible Study 9:30 UWM Board Mtg</td>
<td>7 Community Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45 Worship 10 Education Hr 11:15 Worship</td>
<td>7 Bible Study</td>
<td>9:30 Staff Mtg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Come worship with us!
Jan. 15: 1 Samuel 3:1-10, John 1:35-51, “Come and See”
Jan. 29: Deuteronomy 18:15-20, Mark 1:21-28, “Center of Authority”

For the most current information, click the “general calendar” link on our website at www.brecksvilleumc.com
Many of us were introduced to Epiphany through the familiar silhouetted-image of Three Wise Men bearing gifts as they followed the Great Star by night. In some cultures, Epiphany is known as the Day of the Kings (Día de los Reyes). It is also known as Twelfth Day or Twelfth Night, reflecting an old custom of giving a gift for each of the days from December 25 to January 6 for the 12 days of Christmas. The day has special meaning for a number of reasons. Several branches of Christianity celebrate the birth of the Christ Child on January 6 or January 7.

The word epiphany means appearance or manifestation. Popular usage likens epiphany to words such as eureka or ah! Use of this word by some English speakers conjures images of having a light bulb turned on, or of being able to see something that was once hidden from view. The texts for the Sundays after the Epiphany dramatize the many ways that we people came to understand who Jesus was, through his baptism, the miracle at the wedding, or through that bodacious declaration in his hometown synagogue! But, this ever-widening circle of revelation began 'outside the circle' of Judaism, so to speak, with the Magi.

Who were the Magi?
Many versions of the Bible refer to them as the Wise Men. We often forget that these Magi or Wise Men were non-Jews. Older sources suggest that they were priestly descendants of one of the tribes of the Medes known for their knowledge of the stars (astronomy) and their ability to interpret dreams.

What can we learn from the Wise Men?
First, the Wise Men began their journey because of their beliefs. It was a common belief that when a world leader like a king was born that a special stellar phenomenon would appear in the sky. The Magi saw something that convinced them that they had seen the long-awaited sign. Historians tell us that the Jews, the Romans, and the Persians were all watching the skies about that time, looking for signs of the birth of an extraordinary king. A few years before, around 11 BC, Halley's Comet had been seen. There were other stellar phenomena, including a bright star, Sirius, which appeared brightly in the daytime instead of at night. The Wise Men saw the star and began their journey.

Second, the Wise Men were willing to follow what they had seen into unknown territory. Their journey took them outside their country and their comfort zone. The Wise Men risked the consequences of disobeying Herod, who was known to behave as a madman when provoked and returned to their country by another way.

The Christian journey is often an off-road excursion.

Third, the Wise Men were committed to the journey -- wherever the star might lead.
The Wise Men set out to find a newborn King by following a star and ended up in finding a baby born to young, relatively poor parents! Not exactly what they expected and not exactly what befit their dignity as priests.

In this coming year, may we look to heaven for guidance and comfort and may we accept God's blessings in whatever forms we find them, just as the Wise Men accepted that their long, expensive journey led them to a baby born to young, inexperienced parents who lived on the poor side of town.

Finally, the Wise Men brought gifts.
They did the thing that people in the East or in Africa or in India would do when visiting royalty. They brought gifts.

❖ Gold was the kind of gift that you brought to a king.
❖ Frankincense was the kind of gift that you would bring to a priest.
❖ Myrrh was given to someone who was about to die.

On This Twelfth Day, or Three Kings Day, otherwise known as Epiphany, think of the gift that you will offer to God in the coming year. The gift of time? The gift of your talents? Your service in the community? Your witness and testimony? The gift of undying love and devotion?

Their greatest gift comes to us in the form of a realization. The Wise Men were the first Gentiles to recognize that Jesus belongs to everyone. Good news is for everyone, not just a select few.

Star of wonder, Star of light
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, Still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light. Amen.