

# January 2025

## PASTOR'S MESSAGE

### Pastor's Pen,

"See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare" (Isaiah 42:9).

These words were spoken to the Israelite people who were held in captivity in Babylon. A generation before (587 BC) the Babylonians invaded the Promised Land and conquered the city of Jerusalem which was their capital and destroyed their temple. From there two things happened: people fled the city and settled elsewhere. Others, that is the more prominent citizens, were taken prisoner and deported to Babylon so they could not take back control and rebuild Jerusalem.

Then in 539 BC, King Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon and he allowed the Hebrew people to go back to Judah. Many of these making that journey to Jerusalem had been born in Babylon during the 40-year period of exile, so they had never personally seen their homeland of Judah and the great city of Jerusalem. But for years, those exiles had heard story after story told by their parents and grandparents – stories about the peace and prosperity of Judah, stories about the beauty of the land and the magnificence of Jerusalem's Temple.

And they were thinking, now we can turn back the clock and restore our land to what it was in the past. Let's make Jerusalem what our parents described it to be. We will rebuild our city and replace every stone in the walls of the Temple that had been destroyed and we will make an exact replica of what we had before.

But God had other plans for them: "The former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare." And that new thing for God's people would be this: that they be a light to the nations. I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness" (Isaiah 42:7). God was not looking for them to turn the clock back, but forward. They were now called, not to hunker down and avoid those nations which surrounded them, they were to be a light to them.

The beginning of a new year is a reminder that "the former things have come to pass," and the same God who provided new beginnings for his people in the Old Testament continues to create new beginnings for his people today. This means being forward looking people. Biblically, to be a part of God's plans always means a willingness to participate in a future that is different than the past. When we get stuck in the past, the result is likely to be an unclaimed future blessing. Let's be looking for what new thing God will declare in 2025 for the

**JANUARY 5:** On this Sunday we will look at the significance of the Wisemen in early narratives of the life of Jesus, and will explore why the Wisemen were delayed in getting to Jesus. The Sermon is called "The Wisemen Were Late" and the text is Matthew 2:1-12. We will also be celebrating the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

**JANUARY 12:** This Sunday begins the first in a three-part series on the three Temptations of Jesus as described in the Gospel of Matthew. Following the baptism of Jesus, we are told, "He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matthew 4:1). On this day we will examine the first one, when the tempter said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread" (Matthew 4:3). What might this say about our perspective on material possessions? This day will also include a **Service of Baptism Renewal** (see explanation below).

**JANUARY 19:** The second temptation of Jesus described in Matthew's gospel is found in Matthew 4:5-7, when he is taken to the pinnacle of the temple and the tempter says to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down" (Matthew 4:6). What does this say about how our faith relates to personal security?

**JANUARY 26:** Matthew's gospel portrays Jesus being taken to a high mountain and shown all the kingdoms of the world. The tempter says, "All these I will give to you if you fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:9). What does this say about our faith as it relates to power?

**A SERVICE OF BAPTISM RENEWAL:** January 12 is a Sunday we recall the Baptism of Jesus and what that meant, and we will be providing a Service of Baptism Renewal recall our own baptism and the meaning of it by way of a Service of Baptism Renewal. During worship we will provide the questions which are asked when a person is baptized, and then we as a congregation will "renew" these baptismal vows by answering them as a congregation. For those of us who were baptized as infants, we have no memory of hearing these questions, as they would have been addressed to our parents. The renewal service will be a way to hear these questions again and to reaffirm their meaning for our discipleship today. This a day to remember our baptism and to be strengthened in

## **ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING:**

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation members will be **Sunday, January 26**, immediately following the worship service. The purpose of the meeting is to receive annual reports from the various committees and organizations of the church. Any other new business or concerns may be engaged at this meeting.

**PER CAPITA PAYMENTS:** The per capita payments have been established at **\$40.00** per member for the year 2025. These payments go toward the salaries and overheads costs of the higher governing bodies of our denomination, namely the presbytery (Presbytery of the Western Reserve), the synod (the Synod of the Covenant), and the General Assembly. You can designate your per capita payment on your offering envelope and that you make payments of **\$40.00** for each member of your family on the membership roll. We are obligated to pay our per capita regardless of how much we receive toward it. The total Rocky River Church owes is **\$12,600**, based on the membership roll as of December 31, 2023.

**CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING:** Thank you to all who supported the Christmas Joy Special Offering which supports the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions for the Presbyterian Church (USA) as well as educational scholarships for students attending Presbyterian affiliated colleges and seminaries. The total we received was \$1480.00



**MITTEN TREE: Our thanks to the Youth Fellowship Group for contributing their gifts and talents to our Church's mission work for December, our Annual Mitten Tree! It will greet you in the Narthex as you enter the church Sunday mornings for worship. We are asking for donations of NEW mittens, scarves, hats, and socks through January 6. Donations will go to the North Presbyterian Church, our urban partner church in Cleveland. Please help us keep others warm and safe during the winter months ahead.**



## **Preschool Update:**

**Hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and Happy New Year!**



**We have a fun day planned for when the children return to school in January. They may wear their pajamas to school for a day.**

**If you know of anyone that is looking for a preschool, please let me know that we are now enrolling for the 2025-2026 school year. They may call the preschool office and set up a tour. (440) 895-5437.**



**How does the church know someone's hospitalized?**

**YOU tell us. Due to privacy laws regarding medical information, the church is not notified when someone is having surgery, is hospitalized or faces some other crisis. Please share joys, concerns and sorrows by telling the pastor or by calling or messaging the church office.**

# JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

LANCE WILSON	01/05
BETH ERML	01/05
HARPER* HUSTEK	01/06
ROBERT MURPHY	01/07
DAWN GORMAN	01/08
HILARY* WATTS	01/10
EMMA* CLARK	01/10
GRETCHEN KOCH	01/12
LINDA ESDON	01/12
JOEL* SOLAK	01/15
MELANIE FREDRICKSON	01/15
CHARLIE* WYSONG	01/16
LISA* WATTS	01/17
OWEN STICKNEY	01/17
EVAN* JENNINGS	01/18
ROGELIO* RANGEL	1/18
LYLA* RANGEL	01/18
BOB DAVIS	01/19
MARTY HEATH	01/20
CAROL JENKINS	01/20
ALAINA* WATTS	01/21
SUSAN PENNING	01/26
COLIN BROWN	01/27
SARA WILDER	01/28
BUD JONES	01/30

## To all the bakers for the cookie exchange!

We were able to deliver 17 generous cookie boxes to our homebound members with plenty left for ex-changing and sharing. Our homebound members were extremely appreciative of being remembered by the congregation! So again, thank you! We heard from Dick Heath and Jane Doughman that these were so welcomed and shared with others!

**Reminder - the church office will be closed on January 1st & 2nd. Regular office hours will resume on January 3rd.**





## Thoughts from the Parish Advisor - Brenda Peterson

"...Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are  
powerful beyond measure.

It is our light,  
not our darkness that most frightens us.  
We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant,  
gorgeous, talented, fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be?

*You are a child of God.*

Your playing small does not serve the world.

There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so  
that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine,  
as children do.

We were born to make manifest  
the glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us;  
it's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine,  
we unconsciously give other people  
permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear,  
our presence automatically liberates others."

Marianne Williamson

## **Christian Education Corner**

**Christian Education Facilitator, Brenda Peterson**

[bpeterson@riverpres.org](mailto:bpeterson@riverpres.org)



**Adult Education:** Looking for something new in 2025?...

**We welcome you to join us in Adult Education, Sundays 9:00-10:00 AM.**

We will be starting off the year with a bible study from Amy Jill-Levine, The GOSPEL of JOHN. The program involves reading (if you choose) and a DVD segment we watch together and then have discussion. Be curious, come in and join us for a session. This study will begin January 5, 2025. Coffee and tea are available.

**Youth Fellowship:** We will continue studying and discussing Matthew 25. As we become more familiar with the bible teachings our passion and knowledge grows and our understanding how Jesus would like us to be towards one another. Compassion, kindness and love can be expressed by helping others.

We are aiming to do that with your help and donations for the Mitten Tree. We will be collecting items until January 5, 2025. We will make our first round of donations to the North Church before 12/22/24. If there are more donations, we may be able to assist another group in need.

**Sunday School:** We are delighted that the children in Sunday School, a few from the youth group and one awesome and fun Dad could share the story with us, Meeting the Christ Child. The Christmas pageant was beautiful. The children will continue their lessons in 2025 from Young Children and Worship.

The children are delightful to spend with. Our teachers Ellen Schickel and Melanie Fredrickson are fabulous with the children. We continue to search for volunteers to help the teachers in the classroom. Please consider spending a Sunday with these beautiful children. Connect with Brenda if interested, [bpeterson@riverpres.org](mailto:bpeterson@riverpres.org)



**Thoughts from the Parish Advisor -  
Brenda Peterson**

*A Blessing for those who aren't feeling much Christmas Spirit*

*Bless you who feel grumpy, you who are blah,  
May you be right where you are.  
Bless you who are weary, you who are flailing.  
May you find rest.  
Bless you who are burdened by grief, you  
whose heart is so heavy.  
May you not be rushed from your feelings, but may memories make  
you smile, too, and may laughter surprise you.  
Bless you who can't quite muster any pre- Christmas cheer.  
May you plant seeds of goodness for seasons  
to come.  
Bless you who bristle at mandatory merriment.  
May you sense the solidarity and the hospitality  
Of the ancient story, which made room for fear,  
Confusion, and bewilderment.  
Bless you who sit in the darkness.  
May you find friendship there.*

*-Jeff Chu*





## JANUARY 2025 LIBRARY LINGO

Mary Schulz, Librarian

DISPLAYS:

New books

Martin Luther King, Jr. books

NEW ITEMS FOR ADULTS:



**FICTION:** all in Fiction section (thanks to Barb Johnson for the donations!)

### Whistle Stop Café Mysteries

Join best friends Debbie Albright and Janet Shaw as they step out in faith to open the Whistle Stop Café inside the historic train depot in Dennison, Ohio. During WWII, the depot's canteen workers offered food and gratitude to thousands of soldiers on their way to war via troop-transport trains. Our sleuths soon find themselves on track to solve mysteries- both past and present. Come along for the ride for stories of honor and duty to God and country,

### Let It Snow

Debbie can't wait to decorate the café for her first Christmas back home in Dennison. But, she discovers that a historical oak bench outside the building is gone! As Debbie and Janet hunt for the thief, they stumble across an 80-year-old mystery involving a note that could spell the difference between victory and disaster in World War II.

### When You Wish Upon a Star

When Janet and Debbie volunteer for the Girl Scouts, they find a scout handbook from 1941 in the museum. Pressed inside is a poisonous monkshood flower along with a coded message. As they work to crack the code, they discover a story of a Japanese American woman who came to Dennison during WWII to escape a terrible fate.

### Accentuate the Positive

Janet buys a vintage writing desk with an old fountain pen. She sets it up in the cafe for customers to write encouraging notes. The senior citizens write moving memories about the Greatest Generation. The pen, which turns out to be valuable, disappears.

### Somewhere over the Rainbow

Janet helps Dennison's newest resident, Audrey, sort through her late mother's belongings. They discover color stills from a popular WWII animated short film! But, why would Audrey's mother, who discouraged Audrey from pursuing her artistic talent, have these? Secrets are uncovered about Audrey's mom and the famous cartoon.

### A String of Pearls

Debbie's friend's nephew is desperate to find the treasure from a train robbery that occurred near Dennison in the 40's. He discovers a string of rare black pearls and a cryptic note in Beatrice's armoire, but the pearls go missing.

### Down Forget-Me-Not Lane

Debbie and Janet are thrilled to honor Ray, Dennison's last remaining WWII veteran, in a town celebration of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day. But, Ray's army jacket was stolen during the night, leading to a buried secret about Ray's heroic wartime deeds during the liberation of the island of Guernsey.

### Set the World on Fire

The warehouse containing the police force's evidence of recent crimes is set on fire, and crucial items needed to convict criminals go up in smoke. Janet and Debbie discover clues that the arsonist might be someone they've met.

### Fools Rush In

Janet, from Whistle Stop Café, arrives to discover someone has vandalized the café. But, the only thing missing is a framed World War II photo of 3 women standing behind a table with a briefcase on it.

### That's My Baby

Sadie, owner of the doll hospital That's My Baby, received an anonymous note about her inherited World War II rag doll which had an emerald brooch hidden inside.

### For Sentimental Reasons

Debbie believes she may be the baby abandoned at the Dennison Depot decades ago.



# January 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>5 Communion Sunday / Food Sunday</b> 9:00 a.m. Adult Education 10:30 a.m. Worship 11:30 a.m. Coffee Hour	<b>6</b> 8:00 p.m. CE Committee	<b>7</b> 10:30 a.m. Three Arts Board Mtg.	<b>8</b> 7:30 p.m. Men's AA Mtg. 7:30 p.m. PNC (West Room)	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> 7:00 a.m. Friday morning Men's Group (Zoom)	<b>11</b> 7:00 p.m. Altered Attitudes
<b>12</b> 9:00 a.m. Adult Education 10:30 a.m. Worship 11:30 a.m. Coffee Hour 6:00 p.m. Youth Fellowship	<b>13</b> 7:00 p.m. Women's AA Mtg.	<b>14</b> 9:30 a.m. Expressions of Faith 4:30 p.m. HR Committee Mtg. 6:30 p.m. Property Mtg.	<b>15</b> 7:30 p.m. Men's AA Mtg. 7:30 p.m. PNC (West Room)	<b>16</b> 7:00 p.m. Priscilla Circle Mtg.	<b>17</b> 7:00 a.m. Friday morning Men's Group (Zoom)	<b>18</b> 7:00 p.m. Altered Attitudes
<b>19</b> 9:00 a.m. Adult Education 10:30 a.m. Worship 11:30 a.m. Coffee Hour	<b>20</b> <b>Martin Luther King Day Office is Closed</b> 7:00 p.m. Women's AA Mtg. 7:00 p.m. Session Mtg.	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> 7:30 p.m. Men's AA Mtg. 7:30 p.m. PNC (West Room)	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> 7:00 a.m. Friday morning Men's Group (Zoom)	<b>25</b> 7:00 p.m. Altered Attitudes
<b>26</b> 9:00 a.m. Adult Education 10:30 a.m. Worship 11:30 a.m. Coffee Hour 6:00 p.m. Youth Fellowship	<b>27</b> 7:00 p.m. Women's AA Mtg	<b>28</b> 9:30 a.m. Expressions of Faith	<b>29</b> 7:30 p.m. Men's AA Mtg. 7:30 p.m. PNC (West Room)	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> 7:00 a.m. Friday morning Men's Group (Zoom)	

**SYMPATHY:** We extend our sympathy and prayers to the family of Marie McNeil who passed away on December 20. May the Spirit of the Incarnate Lord be a present help and strength for them. A memorial service is being planned for Sunday, January 19, 2:00 p.m., in the Walker Chapel at the Rocky River Church.

**\*\*Please note: Submissions for the monthly Pulse need to be in to the church office no later than the 25th of each month. Thank you!**



## **Stewardship 2025 Update**

***Expressing our Gratitude:*** We are so thankful for the RRPC households that have made their financial pledge commitments for 2025! As of 12/22/2024, we have received pledges totaling \$298,908.64. If you have not yet made your financial commitment, it's not too late. As the Session and Finance Committees are working to finalize next year's operating budget, **each and every single pledge** becomes that more vitally important in being able to meet even our minimum budget requirements. If you have not yet turned in your 2024 pledge card, please drop it in the offering plate (mark the outside of the envelope with the word "pledge") or mail it to the church as soon as possible. **Thank you for your continuing support of the ministries and programs of our church!**

**We are looking for 2 ushering co-leads, one for the Jan/May/Sept Team and another co-lead for the Feb/June/October Team. The Co-Lead works to organize, lead and staff 2 to 3 ushers for each of the Sundays in the months the team is responsible for. We have many volunteers to serve as ushers we just need help with lead leading the team. If you think you can do this, contact Anne Busher at 440-539-0787. We sure can use your help.**

# “The Pulse”

the monthly newsletter of

Rocky River Presbyterian Church

January 2025



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