



An Open and Affirming, Accessible to All Congregation



A Message from Our Pastor, the Rev. Amy Gopp

Beloved of God,

I have often longed for 2020 vision. But I have worn glasses since the 3rd grade! As I look to this new year, I am grateful that I do not have to have 2020 vision but can trust that God does. My prayer is that I may see with divine eyes by putting on the lenses of the sacred so that the world I see and work toward is not one of injustice and suffering, but rather one of God's glorious making and original intention.

We can all put on sacred lenses by listening for and studying God's Word, trusting that the birth of Christ *is* the birth of hope, love, joy and peace for us, and by inviting the Spirit to move through our lives. As you look ahead to a new season, a new year, and perhaps a "reboot" in your life, I invite you to see the world through this new pair of lenses—divine lenses that allow you to see and achieve beyond what you normally would and to be comforted by the vision of all that God has in store for you, for our church and for all of humanity. I also invite you to join my Sunday morning class, "Ushering in the Holy" as we consider who God is and who we are in relation to God.

With this divine vision we can anticipate what I know will be a transformative year in the life of our congregation. Throughout 2020 we will enjoy special events and themes for the remaining six months of our bicentennial celebration. Our Strategic Plan, after a year's worth of visioning, dreaming, researching and strategizing, will go into effect pending approval from all of you at our Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 19. A guide for our congregation's life and ministry for the next 3 years—and perhaps longer should we together decide to embark upon a Capital Campaign—the Strategic Plan in and of itself is an example of our collaborative efforts as a community of faith to achieve our Gospel mission. It is also an invitation—to our entire congregation but also to each of us as individuals—to recommit ourselves to following Jesus Christ and to allowing Him to change us, inside and out, so that we might change our community and beyond.

I believe, with all my heart and soul, that the Kent UCC can model a different way of being in the world—a kinder, humbler, more just, generous, compassionate, and loving way than what our contemporary culture and political climate offer. Love has come! Don't be blind to it! Put on divine lenses to see the vision that we, inspired by God, have cast for our church, community, and world. And then get ready to roll up your sleeves and SERVE! The implementation of our Strategic Plan will take all of us working together, acting as the UNITED Church of Christ to usher in a new era of life-changing ministry and mission in the name of Jesus Christ.

Here's to an extraordinary new year! May we live into 2020 with conviction, courage, joy and love—trusting that God is with us every step of the way, guiding us with divine 2020 vision. With all my love and excitement, Pastor Amy

Moderator's Message - Warner Mendenhall

This month's message will be short. I choose to share just one important message and that is to remind each member of the congregation that the **Annual Meeting will be held January 19, 2020 following the church service.**

The congregation will be asked to vote on two major committee reports. The first will be presented by the Constitution and By-law Review Committee. Their suggestion will improve the administrative and financial structure, ensuring more effective and efficient operation of the church.

Second, the congregation will have an opportunity to support the year-long work of the Strategic Planning Task Force. This report had its genesis with the congregation visioning weekend and provides a clear summary of the congregation's vision. The Task Force report suggests development priorities for the coming three to five years. We each own the vision, and we will need to determine our spending priority. To that point, the congregation will be asked to support a feasibility study to determine the probability of success of a Capital Campaign.

In summary, my message is to be sure to attend the January 19 Congregational Annual Meeting. It is about our future of "Being the Church."

A "Women's Christmas" Retreat for the New Year – Saturday, January 11, 2020

On Saturday, January 11, Pastor Amy will lead a women's spiritual retreat. This is a special day-long intergenerational retreat for all the women of the congregation, from high schoolers to seniors. There is a custom, rooted in Ireland, of celebrating Epiphany (January 6, which brings the Christmas season to a close) as Women's Christmas. Called *Nollaig na mBan* in Irish, Women's Christmas originated as a day when the women, who often carried the domestic responsibilities all year, took Epiphany as an occasion to celebrate together at the end of the holidays, leaving hearth and home to the rest of the family for a few hours. Celebrated particularly in County Cork and County Kerry, the tradition is enjoying a revival.

Whether your domestic or professional commitments are many or few, Women's Christmas offers a timely opportunity to pause and step back from whatever has kept you busy and hurried in the past weeks or months. As the Christmas season ends, this is an occasion both to celebrate with friends and also to spend time in reflection before diving into the responsibilities of this new year. The Women's Christmas Retreat is offered in that spirit. Set aside this Saturday to accept Pastor Amy's invitation to rest, to reflect, and to contemplate where you are in your unfolding path. Mindful of those who traveled to welcome the Christ-child and who returned home by another way, we will turn our attention toward questions about our own journey. Sisters, mark your calendars for Saturday, January 11 from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Please register by contacting the church office or on-line.

UPCOMING DATES (DETAILS WITHIN THIS *MESSENGER*)

December 31: New Year's Eve - Church office closed

January 1: New Year's Day - Church office closed

January 4: UYF Winter Retreat

January 10: Edna Harth Memorial Service (10am in chapel)

January 11: Women's Christmas Retreat (9-4 in chapel)

January 17: *Musica Mundana* concert with Justin Wallace (7pm in sanctuary)

January 18: NAACP Breakfast (9am VMH)

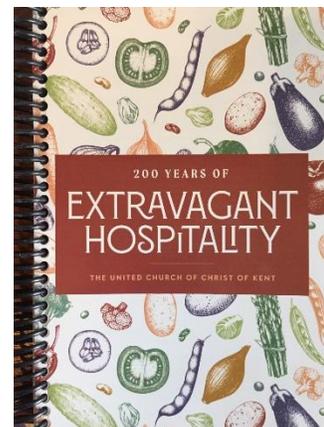
January 19: MLK/Ecumenical Sunday with guest preacher Rev. Jack Sullivan

January 19: Annual Congregational Meeting (after worship)



Special Pricing Extended for Bicentennial Cookbook!

Our long-anticipated Bicentennial Cookbook has arrived. *200 Years of Extravagant Hospitality* celebrates our church's history of fun, food and fellowship. Besides the 201 delicious recipes, the book is full of pictures, stories, and helpful hints, all printed in full color on quality paper. Chances are you will find a bit of yourself inside in the form of a recipe, picture, or a warm memory.



Do you still need to purchase a copy? Some copies are still available, and they make great gifts for family and friends. We have decided to extend our holiday pricing through the month of January. Each book is \$20, but if you purchase 3 or more, each book is \$18. Please contact Julie Wallace (the4jws@aol.com) or Leah in the church office to get your copies.

Outreach News – Terri Silver



Congratulations!! We are proud to announce that the congregation reached the goal of 2,000 hours of volunteer work in just six months! Thanks to Renee LaCombe for tracking our hours and creating a

wonderful “Be the Church” sign made up of over 2,000 pieces of card stock, representing all our volunteer hours. Keep up the good work – Be the Church!

Habitat Build update: There is a meeting next week to talk about future build dates on the Atwater home. We will post signs and include messages in the Bulletin when those dates are available.

Please consider volunteering to sit on the board for either *Kent Social Services* or *Haven of Portage County*. We would like to have a presence in those organizations. If you are interested, please mention it to someone on Outreach or at the church office.

Property Ministry Requests Your Time and Talent!!

Most of us recognize the need to maintain our homes, including such tasks such as keeping light fixtures in working order, maintaining plumbing, and monitoring kitchen appliances. Now imagine the time and effort it takes to keep 1,000 lights in working order, maintain 10 bathrooms, and keep a kitchen capable of preparing meals for 150 people in working order. You get the point! The reality is that our church building is aging, and the varied uses of the facility are increasing. The combined effects of these circumstances have resulted in a problem: the capacity of the Property Ministry is no longer able to respond to needs as they crop up.

In order to manage this challenge, members of the Property Ministry have agreed to implement a new system to distribute the work load more efficiently and equitably. In the future, work will be distributed among five sub-committees with a lead member designated to each area. This lead person will develop a core team to tackle the tasks in their area, and the help of additional volunteers will be sought from the congregation at large. These volunteers will be called upon based on their skills, interests, and needs. Lead contacts include:

AREA:	LEAD PERSON:	CONTACT INFORMATION:
General Maintenance	Mike Kaulen	mkkaulen@att.net (616) 283-5970
HVAC/plumbing	Bill Arthur	billandkelle@earthlink.net (414) 749-7446
Electrical/Technical	Paul Sellman	psellman@sbcglobal.net (330) 678-8052
Kitchen	George Dietz	gldietz2@gmail.com (330) 554-3869
Grounds/Roof	John Hetrick	hetrickj2@att.net (330) 633-1969

At this time, we are asking you to consider joining the Property Ministry and to identify one or more of these core teams with whom you'd like to affiliate yourself. If you can't commit to becoming a member of the Property Ministry, we ask you to become a volunteer to help with projects of interest to you. Property volunteers will be part of the general team of people who will be called upon on an as-needed basis. We ask that you let us know about your interests and skills, and you will be added to a developing data base of those we will call on when a pertinent need arises.

Please understand that the alternative to seeking your help is to rely on outside contractors that could be costly. To date, we have been able to keep such costs at a minimum, but we now need to ask for the gift of your time and talent if we are going to be able to maintain, repair, and remodel our facilities and grounds. Please let any of the leads or other Property Ministry members know about interests or questions that you might have. Other members of the Property Ministry include:

Jim Dunlap	jrdunlap@neo.rr.com	330-592-1437
Pat Ray	pray2@neo.rr.com	330-673-4478
Richard Werstler	dickman53@aol.com	330-861-3623
Marilyn Sorrick	sorrickm@yahoo.com	330-678-6125
Dick Symons	rsymons45@gmail.com	330-204-5306

Finally, a member of our Ministry will be in the Narthex for the next few Sundays to answer questions and welcome you to serve the needs of our church family. Thanks so much for the offer of your gifts, interests, and talents.

Special Guest Preacher on January 19 for MLK/Ecumenical Sunday

Sunday, January 19 is Ecumenical Sunday; the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins that day. It is also the Sunday we will celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. We are honored to welcome the Reverend Dr. Jack Sullivan, Jr. as our guest preacher! Rev. Sullivan is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He serves as Executive Director of the Ohio Council of Churches, the 100-year-old ecumenical agency linking 17 denominations in Ohio as a sign of Christian unity, mutual support and shared public witness. Dr. Sullivan is the immediate-past Senior Pastor of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a 132-year-old congregation in Findlay, OH. He has also given leadership as Executive Director of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation and as Regional Minister and President (bishop) of the Northwest and Pennsylvania Regions, respectively, of his denomination.

An internationally known speaker, social justice advocate, ecumenist, and death penalty abolitionist, Dr. Sullivan is co-president of the Disciples Justice Action Network; immediate past president of the Governing Board of Ohioans to Stop Executions; and a newly appointed member of both the Global Advisory Council of Restorative Justice International and the Steering Committee of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty. He is also a member of the National Action Network and the governing bodies of the national men's ministry, EcuMentors, the Ohio Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Ohio Poor People's Campaign, and Journey of Hope: From Violence to Healing, a national anti-death penalty organization. Dr. Sullivan's anti-death penalty activism stems from his interest in ending cycles of violence, a concern he has known all too well after the 1997 murder of his sister, Jennifer, in Cleveland, OH. He is a former member of the governing board of the Ohio Conference of the United Church of Christ and chairperson of the board of the Washington (State) Association of Churches and convener of its Bishops and Executives Roundtable.

Space for Grace Prayer Time

On Tuesday mornings we gather together to pray. For those interested (who doesn't need more prayer?), we meet in the Lounge at 7:30 am. There are many ways to pray—and we are each led to experiment with different ways than we may be used to. Don Bubenzer has been practicing “centering prayer”. His Advent meditation led him to write this, which we share with you. It is entitled “***An Audience with Jesus***”.

“Each week I look forward to Space for Grace. To sit in silence for a half-an-hour with others of our community is bliss. I anticipate that if I can quiet myself the Spirit will appear. This morning I had a dream—well, a day-dream. I was standing in line at the mall waiting to sit on Santa's lap. There were other adults in line as well as children. When it was my turn to make my wish on Santa's lap, I stepped forward. There was an empty cradle with Jesus sitting behind it, nodding for me to take my place. As I climbed in, I noticed Mary and Joseph at his shoulder and a panoply of others: sheep, cattle, donkeys, shepherds, people of wisdom and even friends that I missed. The sky was filled with stars and a Star. As I lay down a gentle breeze, the Breath of God, rocked the cradle. I made my wish and our grandchildren climbed in the cradle and then all of the children of the world and we giggled in joy. May the Peace of a new year be in your lives.”

Stephen Ministry: Help Wanted! - Sue Otterson



We are working to schedule our training for our newest class of Stephen Ministers. This is a very rewarding way to serve the church and the community. If you'd like more information, speak with any of our current Stephen Ministers, Pastor Amy, or Sue Otterson, your Stephen Leader. We are looking to begin the classes in early February.

Faith Formation News – Kim Nagy

So often, we think about faith formation in the context of the four walls of the church—it is Sunday school, Bible study, worship, youth group, and Confirmation. Faith formation *is* all of those things, yes, but I am infamous for reminding people that faith formation begins at home! Many of us take the opportunity to come up with one or two resolutions in the New Year, and I encourage you this year to establish a daily habit of meditation and devotional time if you do not already maintain such a practice.



For youth and adults, this might be a time of 20 minutes or more without technology, reading the Bible or other devotional material, praying in color, writing in a journal, listening to meditative music, or simply sitting in silence. These kinds of practices can be cultivated with children as well on a smaller scale, even taking five minutes at the dinner table or bedtime to tell God three things you are thankful for that day.

As we move into a new year brimming with opportunity, I encourage you to be intentional about taking the time to ground yourself in the holiness that is present all around us each and every day. It's one of my resolutions—let's take this journey together!

Suggestions for Devotionals (found at UCC Resources):

God is Still Speaking: 365 Daily Devotionals

OMG: Devotional for Teens and Young Adults

Hard and Holy: Devotions for Parenting

Living with Cancer: Meditations on Patience and Love by Smith and Smith

Prayers from Chautauqua by Campbell

Rise Up: Spirituality for Resistance

Christian Education Ministry – Becky Dunlap

An uplifting performance was enjoyed by all when the children presented “Hark the Angel Sang Off-Key” on December 15 during worship service. Thank you to our much-talented and child-centered Rhuna Wall, director of Children’s Worship in the Arts.

An amazing new year begins, and our children continue to be the church in our community. They are completing the counting and bundling of the multitude of diapers the children purchased with half of their Sunday School offerings (the other half donated to the Kent UCC Habitat for Humanity build), as well as all the diapers and wipes generously donated by the adults in the congregation! The children will deliver the diapers/wipes to the Clothing Center for distribution, and they thank you for your help with their annual project.

In 2020 we will continue to have whole-group Sunday School on the first Sunday of each month. This allows our hard-working and dedicated Sunday School teachers to have the opportunity to stay in the worship service and partake in communion upstairs while the children are served communion downstairs. Communion is followed by special worship activities provided by Kim and Rhuna. This meaningful and enriching experience “sets the stage” for each month’s Sunday School lessons.

January Fellowship News – Kathy Robinson

Coffee hours during the month of January will be hosted by the Education Ministry and the Marketing and Communications Committee. Worship and the Arts will host February.

Be sure to mark your January calendar for Friday, January 17 at 7 p.m. for a very special concert, “Images of Light,” by *Musica Mandana*. It features Justin Wallace on harpsichord. An after-concert reception will follow in our narthex.

In addition, the Fellowship ministry will be hosting a Mardi Gras party sometime in February before Lent, tentatively either February 21 or 22. Look in the *Messenger* and church bulletin for final date and time.

Adult Fellowship Groups

Our fellowship groups are a great way to build meaningful relationships and have fun! Consider this an open invitation to join one (or more!) of them!

Women’s Fellowship Groups

Square One meets Saturday, January 4 at 9:30 a.m. at church. We’ll take down Christmas decorations. New members are welcome! Contact Kathy Robinson for more information.

The *Joy Circle* will not be meeting in January and February.

Men's Breakfasts

You should always eat breakfast... so why not join us on *Wednesday mornings*, 7:30 to 8:29, for the most important meal of the day seasoned by a brief time of prayer and some good humored sharing in a men's Christian fellowship? We meet in the back room at Little City Grille, 802 N. Mantua St., Kent. All men are welcome.

Another opportunity for fellowship occurs at the monthly Men's Breakfast at Mike's Place in Kent. Join us in the back left corner of Mike's on the *first Saturday of each month* promptly at 8 a.m. Contact Ralph Kletzien at (330) 673-3415 for information.

Book Group

The group will gather on January 18 at the residence of Lawrence Prichard, 1290 Fairchild Avenue (#413) at 6:30 p.m. They will be discussing *The Tubman Command* by Elizabeth Cobbs. This historical novel researches the behavior and brilliance of Harriet Tubman. It's May 1863, and a demoralized Union army has just pulled back after a stunning defeat at Chancellorsville. Tubman, under General David Hunter, devises the largest-ever plantation raid of the war, intending to free 750 slaves. Both the book and the discussion promise to be intriguing.

Currently plans are for Lawrence and his facility to provide dinner. Please see the church bulletin or call Anna Pyle for more information.

Bagels and Books: An Invitation!

Our men's Bagels and Books discussion group has met each Thursday morning at 7 a.m. at Panera in Chapel Hill for over five years. Currently we are reading *This Changes Everything* by Naomi Klein. The book discusses the difficulty of addressing climate change under our current system of valuing success in financial terms. We invite all men to join us for bagels, maybe oatmeal, and books. Get in touch with Don Bubenzer for more information!

Youth Group News

J-Walkers (Middle School)

Our J-Walkers enjoyed some festive fun in December! Many of them participated in the Advent workshop after worship to kick off the Advent season at the beginning of the month. They also had a Christmas party before Christmas to gather, play games, hear the Christmas story, and exchange white elephant gifts. Anyone in grades 6-8 is welcome to join the J-Walkers every other Sunday in room 127 downstairs from 11:15-12:45.

Upcoming Gatherings:

January 12—Visit to Lawrence Prichard

January 26—Snow Tubing at Brandywine

United Youth Force (High School)

UYF gathered in December for a movie night, shopping for people at Miller House, and visiting

Miller House for their annual holiday party. To embody Kent UCC's bicentennial theme of local outreach for December, UYF decided to hold their holiday party at Miller House, interacting with guests there for the season. They brought stockings that were stuffed and gifts to give to the residents. A great time was had by all! If you are in high school, join us Sundays in the UYF room downstairs from 4-6 p.m. and bring a friend or five! All are welcome!

UYF Souper Bowl Mission Trip Fundraiser

UYF will travel to Washington, D.C. this summer for their annual summer mission trip. They will volunteer in many different places during the week, including soup kitchens. To help raise money for their trip, UYF will collect loose bills and change in soup pots after worship on February 2. They will also be selling jars of dry soup that can be made and used in these cold winter months. Stay tuned for details!

Chancel Flower Sign-Up Calendar Now Available

For those wishing to donate a chancel flower arrangement to adorn our chancel on Sunday mornings, the *2020 Chancel Flower Sign-up Calendar* is now posted on the bulletin board in the narthex next to the stairs. This is a lovely way to recognize a loved one or lift up a special occasion you might be celebrating. You will receive a call from the church office at the beginning of the week to remind you of your flower donation for the Sunday you have selected and ask what message you would like printed in the Sunday bulletin with regard to the celebration or remembrance you wish to honor. As always, you are welcome to take your flower arrangement following the worship service or donate it to the Deacon Ministry for a deacon to give to one of our shut-ins or a member of our congregation presently on their visitation list. Questions? Contact Nancy Bubbenzer at 330-678-3436 (H) or 330-671-1014 (C).

Calling Greeters!

Greeting is a great (and easy!) way to welcome members and guests as they arrive for worship! The Hospitality and Membership Committee has recently assumed responsibility for recruiting greeters. There's a sign-up sheet in VanMeter Hall (on the bulletin board near the kitchen) or let Barb Hanniford know you'd like greet. This is a perfect way to provide a warm welcome and to meet members and guests you may not have met before.

Bicentennial Magnets on Sale Now!



For just \$5, you can purchase a Kent United Church of Christ magnet to proudly display on your car or refrigerator. The Bicentennial Committee will have them available for purchase on Sunday mornings, stop in the church office during the week, or contact Jaime Baughman at sjbaughman1@gmail.com.

Our members of 30 years or more received the oval magnet as a part of our Founders' Day celebration.

Acme Cash Back Program Ends



The Acme Community Cash Back Program ended Saturday, December 28, 2019. Please submit your cash register tapes no later than Sunday, January 26, 2020 for the church to receive credit. You may drop them off at the church or mail to the church office. Thank you for participating. Proceeds will continue to support Kent UCC programs.

Treasurer's Note - Kay Hansford

Please note that all gifts for the 2019 tax year must have been given to the church no later than December 31 or mailed in an envelope postmarked no later than December 31. All gifts received or postmarked after January 1 will be credited to 2020 income.



Treasurer Report

January Birthdays

02 Kristen Horvath-Broda 03 Don Bubenzer, Peter Johnson, D'Issac Foreman 12 Carol Ewers
 13 Ray Aeschliman, Susan Hansford 15 Miriam Ridinger, Pam Rusanowsky
 16 Sherry Bennington, Owen Haney 17 Paul Silver 18 Gwen Gressard 27 Leah Kidney
 28 Nancy Moss, David Ewers, Roger Duvall, Colleen Swango, Elishua Case
 29 Moe Moyseenko 31 Marilyn Skinner, John Rees, Barbara Werstler

Sundays in January

January 5: Epiphany Sunday

Sermon by Pastor Amy

8:45 Senior Pastor's Class - "Ushering in the Holy" (226)

10:00 Worship in Sanctuary

10:15 Children leave for Church School

11:15 Coffee Hour (VMH)

11:15 "Unhanging" of the Greens

January 12: The Baptism of Christ

Sermon by Pastor Amy

8:45 Senior Pastor's Class - "Ushering in the Holy" (226)

10:00 Worship in Sanctuary

10:15 Children leave for Church School

11:15 Coffee Hour (VMH)

6:45 GSNEO #90236 (127)

January 19: MLK/Ecumenical Sunday

Sermon by guest preacher Rev. Jack Sullivan, Ohio Council of Churches

8:45 Senior Pastor's Class - "Ushering in the Holy" (226)

10:00 Worship in Sanctuary

10:15 Children leave for Church School

11:15 Annual Congregational Meeting (Sanctuary)

5:00 Community Outreach Meal (VMH)

January 26: Third Sunday after Epiphany

Sermon by Pastor Amy

8:45 Senior Pastor's Class - "Ushering in the Holy" (226)

10:00 Worship in Sanctuary

10:15 Children leave for Church School

11:15 Coffee Hour (VMH)

6:45 GSNEO #90236 (127)

How to Reach Us

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