

KENT



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE

An Open and Affirming, Accessible to All Congregation



A Message from Our Senior Pastor, Rev. Amy Gopp

Beloved of God,

To state we were all eager to bid good riddance to 2020 would be an understatement. As we said our farewells to this excruciatingly difficult year, thrilled to turn the calendar's page, we quickly realized that the shift from December 31 to January 1 did not mean the end of the COVID-19 pandemic and all the challenges it brings. It did not mean an end to the political strife and division in our country, as only six days into the new year we witnessed a violent attack on the US Capitol. It did not mean an

end to racism and racial and socioeconomic injustice and inequity. The grave issues before us in 2020 did, indeed, follow us (or perhaps they led the way) into this new year.

In just a few weeks, Lent will be upon us. Ash Wednesday is February 17. While we will not be able to impose the ashes as usual, due to COVID restrictions, we will enjoy a (pre-recorded) collaborative worship service with other churches in the UCC Living Water Association. We need to come together in every way possible these days, whether we find creative ways to do so within our own congregation or as the larger body of Christ. Now is the time to come together to help sustain one another. It is also the time to look toward recovery and restoration. Our sense of wholeness has been terribly shattered.

This Lent will be a season of recovery. We will seek healing from Jesus for body, mind, and soul—personal and communal—creating beauty from that which feels broken. We have been through a harrowing time since last Lent that has broken our sense of wholeness—body, mind, and spirit—like a glass vessel fractured into pieces. In this Lenten season of recovery for our physical, communal, mental, intellectual, and environmental health, we will explore the healing narratives of Jesus that tell of divine solidarity with human suffering and remind us that we can begin a journey toward making something beautiful from that which is seemingly broken. Each of us is created as a holy and precious vessel of embodied love.

Recovery *is* on the horizon. Restoration is on the way! We are heading toward the light! God is with us. Healing is what Jesus promises us. As a church community, we are an active part of that recovery and healing process. We can be a health hub in our greater community. Becoming a W.I.S.E. congregation (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged) for those

living with mental health challenges and their families is one very important and concrete step we will take during this Lenten season of recovery and healing. And we will set our eyes on living into what it means to be an anti-racist, pro-reconciling church as well. We will claim, once again, that no matter what dis-ease you may be experiencing, as an individual or a society, you are a holy and precious vessel, divinely made.



With Jesus our Healer with us, we can help one another, our community, our country, our world, and our planet recover and heal...this is nothing less than our divine task and calling. I am so excited to spend this Lenten season with you and invite you to engage fully in this most sacred time in the life of our faith.

In Christ's Embrace,
Pastor Amy

Moderator's Message – Jeff Roeger

My name is Jeff Roeger, and it is with great honor and respect that I serve as the 2021 Moderator of the Kent United Church of Christ. Jaime has been a tremendous role model to follow. I owe her so much in keeping me in progression to lead us into this new year.

My lovely wife, Rachele, and I have been married 22 years and we have three daughters, Emily 21, Sara 18, and Natalie 13. My mom, Sandy, is very active in our church as well. All these ladies keep me in my place daily, trust me.

Just a little about myself. My energies in the UCC have been in the wider church. I love serving! Some service has been in the most challenging of times. One example would be serving as Eastern Ohio UCC Moderator and beginning the process of combining Eastern Ohio and Western Reserve Associations into the Living Waters Association. It was exciting! Watching the results, it was also successful.

Serving our church will be newer to me. I ask for patience and your guidance in the new year. In just a short time all our lives have changed dramatically. My thoughts and prayers are to continue to do our mission "dramatically!"

With serving comes responsibility.

Taking great care of our two pastors and their spouses is very important to me.

I will focus on our church's mission and our Ministries in our church, community, and, world.

I believe the role of moderator is to moderate. I do not have a personal agenda or will try to be behind the scenes steering our ministries a certain direction.

I will fully act in accordance with our church's constitution and bylaws.

One of my goals is to encourage others to serve and know that God calls us in so many ways. It's exciting, adventurous, and even quite humbling.

I look forward to our ever-changing journey...

With the Peace of Christ,

Jeff

Annual Meeting Update

We had a great turnout for our January 24 annual meeting! In that meeting, we:

- Passed the "2021 Realized Budget" presented in the annual report and the 2021 Contingency Budget which is aspirational, depending on income and expenses. Our finances will be reviewed regularly to determine whether we can move to that contingency budget. One priority would be to provide staff raises if resources allow.
- Passed a call agreement for Rev. Kim Nagy, Minister of Faith Formation, which provides a covenant between Pastor Kim and the congregation. A summary of the agreement is in the annual report.
- Elected new officers and incoming ministry chairs and recognized outgoing Council members (see article that follows for details). Barb Hanniford was also recognized for her tenure as *Messenger* editor.
- Heard via an update from John Hetrick on the sanctuary lighting project that work will commence in the next few weeks and should take about two weeks to complete.
- Learned from Jackie Peck that a planning team has been formed to shepherd the congregation through the process of becoming a W.I.S.E. congregation (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged). This process focuses on our ministry to those with mental illness and/or addictions.
- Heard that the COVID Advisory Team continues its work and will meet next February 15.
- Thanked our Senior Pastor and staff for all they have done to create wonderful worship services throughout the pandemic time and to provide support and faith development to the congregation. Julie Swango and Felicia Lumpkin were also thanked for all they have done to produce the weekly worship services.
- Before Pastor Amy closed the meeting with prayer, she thanked the staff and also recognized and offered thanksgiving for the entire congregation for all the care, love, and support we have provided one another during this challenging time. We, too, are called to be spiritual care providers for each other.

2021 Church Officers and Ministry Chairs

At our annual meeting January 24, the congregation approved the Nominating Ministry's slate of incoming officers and new chairs. They are:

- Moderator: Jeff Roeger

- Vice-moderator: Sue Otterson
- Treasurer: Sally Saltzman
- UYF representative: Grace Polcha
- Diaconate chair: Jackie Peck
- Outreach co-chairs: Donna Hess and Linnea Ray
- Property co-chair: Marilyn Sorrick (joining John Hetrick)

Other Council members continuing into 2021 are Barb Hanniford (clerk), Jaime Baughman (past moderator), Becky Dunlap (Education), Julie Wallace (Fellowship), Dick Symons (Finance), John Hetrick (Property), Karen Carmany (Stewardship), Glenn Hanniford (Worship and the Arts), and Barb Wertsler (member at large). Those leaving Council this year with our gratitude for their service include Warner Mendenhall (past moderator), Don Bubenzer (Diaconate), and Terri Silver (Outreach). Other committee chairs for 2021 are Gayle Wall and Eileen West (Hospitality and Membership), Kelley Gifford (Marketing and Communications), and Josh Case and Frank Hairston (Social Justice and Advocacy). The Green Team is led by Julie and Jimmy Wallace and the Mental Health Ministry facilitated by Jackie Peck and Mary Homer.

Many thanks to Jen Case, chair, and the Nominating Ministry for their work. There are still openings on some ministries for new members. Please speak with Jen or Pastor Amy to learn more about openings and to discern where you may best contribute. We need and want you!

UPCOMING DATES (DETAILS WITHIN THIS *MESSENGER*)

February 7: Food collection for Kent Social Services (4-5 p.m.)

February 8-March 28: Mindful Silence adult education series, Sundays, 9-10 a.m.

February 10: Writing workshop, poetry reading, and Q&A with Darren Demaree, 5:30, Zoom

February 17: Ash Wednesday service

February 24-March 24: Broken Vessels: Midweek Lenten Bible Study

Writing Workshop and Poetry Reading with Poet Darren Demaree on Feb. 10

Ohio poet Darren Demaree will offer an online writing and discussion group on Wednesday, February 10 at 5:30 p.m. to address the opioid crisis facing individuals and their loved ones. He will give a reading at 7 p.m. from his book of poems, *Two Towns Over*, which addresses the drug addiction crisis in our country. Both the online workshop and reading are free and open to the public. To register please follow this link: <https://events.travelingstanzas.com/>

Workshop/Discussion: 5:30 – 6:30 p.m., February 10

Poetry reading, followed by Q&A: 7-8 p.m., February 10

This event is sponsored by Ralph and Judy Kletzien, Portage Medical Center Foundation at UH Portage Medical Center and the Kent United Church of Christ in collaboration with the Wick Poetry Center.

Stewardship News - Karen Carmany

Our ministry has completed the 2021 Faithful, Hopeful, Loving generosity campaign. As of January 26, we have received 98 pledges. Hopefully, everyone making a pledge has received their thank-you note. The mail has been a little “iffy” lately.

We say goodbye and THANK YOU! to committee members Julie Dietz, Dee Kemp, and Ralph Kletzien. We welcome new members Lori Babbey and Chrystal Shanley. We are still searching for more members to help us carry out the important work of our committee.

Faith Formation News – Rev. Kim Nagy

By the time you are reading this, we will truly be in the bleak midwinter--halfway between fall and spring. While the sun is slowly lengthening the days, it is still cold, barren, and gray most of the time. It is no wonder that our Christian ancestors from the very early days of our religion valued this wilderness-like time as a season of reflection, repentance, prayer, preparation, and fasting.

It was during the season of Lent last year that we began to shelter at home for the safety and love of our fellow human beings, and we have learned so much this year. We have reflected on the ways our lives have changed for the better...and the worse, prayed ceaselessly for the health of our friends and families as well as for a vaccine, prepared our hearts for the short and long-term changes that this pandemic will bring, fasted from our usual comings and goings lest we spread a deadly virus to others, and more.

These are all rhythms of faith formation, which supports every breath of life.

As we enter another unusual Lenten season, may we continue to practice all that we have learned with a new perspective during this season of recovery. I look forward to another rich church season where we dig deeper into ourselves and find God there. Here are some exciting faith formation opportunities for the 2021 Lenten season:

- *At-home Lent boxes for our families with children
- *Book study on *Book a Crime* by Trevor Noah with our youth
- *A journal reflection Lenten devotional
- *Sunday morning *Mindful Silence* Adult Education Class
- *Midweek Lenten Bible Study via Zoom
- *Instructions for setting up at-home prayer stations

Be sure to check out each weekly email Friday morning for updates and sign-up instructions.

Living with you in hope,
Rev. Kim Nagy

Upcoming Adult Education Opportunities (via Zoom):

Mindful Silence: An 8-Week Series on Contemplative Prayer and Practices
Facilitated by: Rev. Amy Gopp
Sunday mornings 9-10 a.m.
February 7-March 28

Anti-Racism Book Club, Four Hundred Souls Together
Facilitated by: Jen Case

Thursday evenings 7-8:30 p.m.
February 18-March 25

Broken Vessels: Midweek Lenten Bible Study on the Healing Stories from Matthew's Gospel

Facilitated by: Rev. Kim Nagy
Wednesday evenings 7-8 p.m.
February 24-March 24

Re-Membering the Church: Conversations Around Mental Health and Addiction

Facilitated by: The Mental Health Ministry
Wednesday evenings 7-8 p.m.
April 7-May 12

"The New Jim Crow" Book Study

Facilitated by: Sunny Matthews
Sunday afternoons 2-3 p.m.
April 11-May 2

Children's Education

Our January children's church videos focused on Fred Roger's question, "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" Each week, we learned a new way to be a good neighbor. In February, we will focus our attention on the season of Lent. Our weekly children's church videos are uploaded each Sunday at 10 a.m. on the Video KUCC YouTube page.

Weekly emails with faith formation lessons engage families in the topic of the week. If you would like to receive these weekly emails, email knagy@kentucc.org.

Lent begins February 17! Pastor Kim will be delivering at-home Lent boxes to families before Ash Wednesday.

J-Walkers (Middle School Ministry)

Our J-Walkers have been meeting bi-weekly on Zoom for conversation and activities. In January, they talked about Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" Speech and how his dream matched up with God's dream. We talked about our dreams for the future, too.

Coming Up:

February 14: "Share the Love" by surprising a church member

February 28: Zoom Gathering

United Youth Force (High School Ministry)

Since the United Youth Force has been meeting online, they have planned a host of faithful and engaging virtual activities for the rest of the winter and spring. At their planning Zoom on January 10, they had some conversation debriefing what had happened at the Capitol earlier in the week and how they felt about it. They committed to planning a semester of justice-focused activities that could be done virtually and from their homes.

Students who have already had COVID-19 and students who feel comfortable being around a small gathering of people have been committed to packing and handing out meals at the monthly intergenerational community meal.

On January 24, Lizzie Lohman coordinated a speaker from United Against Human Trafficking, Taylor Johnson, who spoke about what Human Trafficking is, how students can be aware of it, the role social media plays, and how they can be agents of change. January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month, and Lizzie felt strongly that United Youth Force members needed to know more about it.

Though this is being written before our January 31 gathering, we are hopeful that singer/songwriter Andra Moran, Creative Director of “The Bridge” at Woodmont Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Nashville, Tennessee, will join our youth group, and other UCC youth groups from the area, in writing an original song that will help our youth process and give voice to all that has happened during this pandemic year. We will be so excited to share this song with you once it is completed!

Coming Up:

February 7 - Soup-er Bowl of Caring Canned Food Drive

(Donate canned goods and other staples in the back parking lot between 4-5 for Kent Social Services)

February 14 - “Share the Love” by surprising a church member

February 21 - February Community Meal

February 28 - Book Study of *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah begins

United Christian Ministries (KSU College Ministry)

UCM is an ecumenical campus ministry at Kent State University, and we proudly support it as our campus ministry! It is the only campus ministry that is welcoming to LGBTQ+ students and fosters interfaith relationships. If you are a KSU student, UCM welcomes you! If you know a KSU student, point them to UCM, which is currently gathering virtually. To support UCM financially, or to see what UCM has been up to recently, visit www.myucm.org.

Outreach Update – Donna Hess

I am very excited about becoming the new Chairperson of the Outreach Ministry. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Terri Silver for her years of dedication to the group and to helping others throughout our community and beyond. I have told her numerous times that she will be a hard act to follow.

Normally February brings our annual *Have-a-Heart Sunday*. This year, we’re joining with the UYF for their canned goods collection on **Sunday, February 7**. Please bring canned goods and other staples to the church’s back parking lot between 4 and 5 p.m. UYF members will be collecting them for Kent Social Services. Consider donating cereal, pasta, canned goods (veggies/fruits/beans/soup), pasta sauce, rice, macaroni and cheese, and ramen noodles. Also, KSS needs gallon-sized zip closure plastic storage bags which they use to package Panera

donations. The Outreach Ministry will bag and deliver the collections, and the children will create Valentines to include.

Our Apostles Build continues with the help of Linnea Ray and a group of Kent UCC volunteers. On January 16, they painted walls and ceilings, and on February 13, they will be installing light fixtures. Almost there! If you would like to help in February, please contact Linnea at (330)931-2063 or lkray@kent.edu.

Finally, thanks to your generosity, we were able to send \$785 from the Christmas Eve donations to the NAACP and \$285 to Veterans of the Cross from donations on November 29 and December 6.

Fellowship – Julie Wallace

Thank you to everyone who participated in the decorating of our outdoor Christmas tree. Although we were unable to have a “normal” Christmas in 2020, placing special ornaments on the outside tree gave us an opportunity to share in the spirit of the season. As the tree was cleaned of its decorations, it was a joy to see the various adornments members shared. It looked as though the birds had eaten all of the seeds and peanut butter from the pinecone ornaments. All of the decorations were boxed and put into storage. Perhaps we will continue this tradition in the coming years, even as we return to our regular celebrations.

Property Ministry Update—John Hetrick

Eighty-eight new padded, heavy duty **folding chairs** were delivered to our church shortly after Christmas. At a cost of \$27/ chair, this was the best option to restoring and improving the VMH seating. The new chairs are grey and comfortable, and we have enough to provide seating with our round tables in VMH. We are currently sorting the older folding chairs into two categories: 1. Clean up and keep, 2. Sell at Rummage Sale or Craig’s List. If you have any other thoughts on what to do with Category #2, please advise.

A contract was signed with Speelman Electric to purchase a **new Sanctuary Lighting System** to replace the existing incandescent overhead lights. The new system will use efficient LED and wireless technologies and increase the number of available spotlights to 14 from 7 to enhance special programming and events. \$40,000 of the \$74,575 contract will be covered by the existing Special Funds Long Term Maintenance account and an Endowment contribution, and the remaining expenses by a five-year construction loan. Installation should occur in late February-early March.

The Property Ministry also thanks Ron Moss for helping with the deep clean of the Chapel kitchenette tile floor last March. This activity was missed in our annual report.

Hospitality and Membership Update – Eileen West and Gayle Wall

Hospitality and Membership wishes our church family Happy New Year! We want to thank George Dietz for serving on our ministry during our initial two years and welcome Tracy Lohman to H & M.

We plan to jump start our zoom game group this winter and look forward to planning other events and activities to engage the congregation. Starting with the new year we are sending birthday greetings to all our members. Please make sure Leah has your birthday in our records. Four prayer shawls were delivered this past month to members experiencing grief or recovering from surgeries. Please contact us if you have ideas for our group's mission to keep members connected during the pandemic.

Book Group – Kathy Robinson

All readers of the church are invited to join us on Saturday, February 20 at 7 p.m. as we Zoom our discussion of *The Book of Friends* by Lisa Wingate. "Inspired by historical events, this is a story of three young women on a journey in search of family amidst the post-Civil War South in 1875 Louisiana during the period of the Reconstruction. Later in 1987, a teacher rediscovers their story and its connection to the lives of her own poverty-stricken students. Amid the gnarled live oaks and run-down plantation homes lie the century-old history of three young women, a long-ago journey, and a hidden book that could change everything." For more information, email Kathy Robinson who will send out the Zoom link prior to February 20.

Adult Small Groups

We have several other small groups that are a great way to build meaningful relationships and have fun! Given the virus outbreak, our groups generally will not meet in person, although some are meeting via Zoom. Please contact Kathy Robinson about Square One Zoom meetings on the first Saturday of each month. Don Bubenzer is your contact for Bagels and Books Zoom meetings Thursday mornings. We will all be so glad when it's safe to resume our gatherings!

Mental Health and Addiction Ministry – Jackie Peck and Mary Homer

The W.I.S.E. Team welcomed youth members, Tracey Lohman and Grace Polcha, young adult Sara Roeger, Patrick Mason and Jeff Roeger to the team last month. We are currently reviewing covenant statements written by W.I.S.E. churches and posted to the UCC Mental Health Network (mhn-ucc.org).

The Mental Health/Addiction Ministry will be offering an adult education series after Easter. As Pastor Kim shared, we will have Wednesday evening discussions on *Re-Membering the Church: Conversations Around Mental Health and Addiction* from April 7 to May 12.

Please pray with us that our journey be blessed by God, loving parent of us all.

Stephen Ministry – Sue Otterson



The daily news. Thoughts and experiences surrounding the pandemic. Politics. Unrest. These are the big, obvious stressors happening around us every day. Sometimes, we feel as if just one more thing will put us over the edge. Some of us have reached the tipping point, or we may feel close to that point. To tip the balance the other way, we may need to unload some of that stress, and that can be done by talking it out with, or sometimes just being with someone. Sometimes, we need

someone we can trust to keep it confidential. You can find that in a Stephen Minister. Reach out to Pastor Amy or me if you are feeling that need to get through what may be stressing you.

Social Justice and Advocacy Ministry News – Barb Hanniford

We're keeping a list of black-owned businesses in the area and just added a new one.

Ravenna Nutrition, 133 E. Main Street, serves healthy shakes, smoothies, and energizing teas. Check out their weekly specials at <https://www.facebook.com/ravennanutrition/>. (330) 235-9407. For the current list, contact Barb at bhanniford@neo.rr.com.

The past weeks have provided many learning opportunities related to social justice through book studies, film discussions, and webinars. As Pastor Kim noted, our own Thursday evening book study is ongoing. Sunny Matthews will be leading a discussion of *The New Jim Crow* in April.

One of the most powerful webinars we've seen recently was from the UCC: [What Do We Say to These Things: Creating a Social Gospel for the 21st Century](#). It featured Rev. Traci Blackmon as moderator, Rubi Sales, Civil Rights activist from the 1960s, and Brittany Packnett Cunningham, Ferguson commissioner and activist. It's well worth watching on YouTube.

Another powerful presentation was given by Marchaé Grair at the Portage County NAACP's MLK Breakfast. She talked on [Collective Liberation: What It Means to Get Free Together](#). It, too, is well worth watching on YouTube.

PFLAG February Meeting

The next PFLAG meeting will be held virtually on Tuesday, February 2 at 7 p.m. through Zoom. Megan Perkins, Clinical Pharmacist from Optum Hospice Pharmacy Services, will be speaking about "How to Be An Ally to The LGBTQ+ Community at End of Life." Anyone wanting to attend should contact Michael Spayd at euchre1@roadrunner.com for login information. Any general questions about PFLAG can be forwarded to Michael Spayd or Pastor Amy.

CHANCEL FLOWER SIGN UP FOR 2021

Though we may not be worshipping any time soon in our sanctuary, a chancel floral arrangement viewed during these times we worship virtually does lift all our spirits and warms our hearts as we hear of a special occasion a member of our congregation is celebrating or help us remember a loved one! Nancy Bubenzer continues to coordinate with those who wish to donate a chancel flower arrangement for the first three months of the new year: **Open Dates Include:**

February 21, 2021

February 28, 2021

March 28, 2021

To save one of these dates to dedicate your chancel floral arrangement, contact Nancy Bubenzer at 330-678-3436 (H), 330-671-1014 © or email her at nbubenzer@gmail.com. Nancy will contact you at the beginning of the week to remind you of your flower donation for the upcoming Sunday worship service and the delivery procedures, along with the message you would like printed in the worship bulletin and announced.

The Blue Box!

Did you know we have a blue box outside our front office doors? It's large enough to accommodate a great many things. Currently, it's holding devotional materials and the 2020 KUCC Annual Report. Would you like a copy? Stop by and pick one up!

Treasurer's Report – Sally Saltzman

I have taken over as treasurer of the church this year. My career included 10 years as an auditor for the Department of Defense and 19 years as an accountant at NASA Glenn Research Center. I will utilize this experience to serve as your Treasurer.

The past year challenged us all in many ways. My hope is that in 2021 we continue to meet new opportunities and challenges together. "For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

I want to thank Kay Hansford for her dedicated service as Treasurer the past two years. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

February Birthdays

02 Dick Symons 03 Anna Mae Pyle 04 Roger Mize 09 Ruth Saltzman 10 Mary Beth Hartman, Bruce Moore 11 Scott Baughman, Bentley Wall 13 Donna Hess, Ralph Kletzien, Warner Mendenhall, Becky Roberts 14 Nancy Bubbenzer, Melody Tankersley 15 Carol Dunlap, Inez Jackson 16 Kathryn Myers, Judy Rees 18 Chloe Delaney Wise 19 Mark Polcha 21 Kirk Gordon, Carol Horner 23 Art Barbour 25 Daniel Kuntzman, Noel Reeves 26 Paul Braden, Jane Hunter, Robert Kemp 27 Sam Madden 28 Elizabeth Cowperthwaite, Lee Drewette

Sundays in February

February 7: Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Sermon by Pastor Amy

10:00 Worship on Facebook and YouTube

February 14: Transfiguration Sunday

Sermon and worship by Nayiri Karjian and our Living Water Association

10:00 Worship on Facebook and YouTube

February 21: First Sunday in Lent

Sermon by Pastor Amy

10:00 Worship on Facebook and YouTube

February 28: Second Sunday in Lent

Sermon by Pastor Amy

10:00 Worship on Facebook and YouTube

How to Reach Us

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Office Hours: Staff are primarily working from home during Covid-19 crisis.
Regular hours are 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

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The Messenger is published monthly and circulated online and in print. Articles and other items for publication in this newsletter should be submitted to the church Administrative Assistant by e-mail to: LDavis@kentucc.org. The deadline for the March issue is Friday, February 21 at noon.

OUR MISSION:

Enlivened by the grace of Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Kent United Church of Christ does justice, embraces faithful love, and walks humbly with our God to serve and transform lives, our community and the world. (Micah 6:8)