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THE Messenger

LENT/SPRING EDITION 2025

A PUBLICATION OF KENT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Purveyors of Awe

by Rev. Amy Gopp, senior minister

*I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house;
I will bow down toward your holy temple
in awe of you. ~ Psalm 5:7*

In this age of anxiety, research shows that awe just might be the antidote to our uncertainty. How do we experience awe? Through beauty, wonder, meaning, curiosity, delight, connection, and self-giving. We need not succumb to overwhelm, fear, or despair. Instead, we can seek awe. We need not wait for it to happen. We can be intentional about looking for the awesome wonders of God in our everyday lives, beginning this Lent.

“Awe is a profound emotional response that can significantly impact our wellbeing and perception of the world,” explains Dr. Marcia McFee of the Worship Design Studio. “Awe often arises from experiences that transcend our usual understanding, such as viewing vast landscapes, listening to powerful music, encountering extraordinary acts of kindness, or feeling heightened devotion and a Divine Presence connecting us all.” To be a “purveyor of awe” is to be intentional about curating a life of spiritual

depth. This has implications not only for one’s own life, but also as motivation to tend to the wellbeing of others. This Lent, we will approach our journey with God with awe as we explore different elements to curate a life of spiritual depth.

The book inspiring our Lenten theme is Dacher Keltner’s *Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life*. I had the profound pleasure of hearing him speak at Chautauqua last summer and knew that I needed to share some of my learnings with you. Biblical poets and mystics have known the power of living an awe-filled existence for a very long time. What neuroscience and modern-day research now suggests is that awe is not *simply* a feel-good emotion, it has consequences for how we perceive the world around us, how we inhabit the events that happen in our lives, and how we treat others. It can even improve our life expectancy and our dedication to the common good.

Perhaps this is a mission for our time. What if we, as individuals and a faith community, took seriously our role to be “purveyors of awe” to promote the experience of awe to our wider community?

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We can make the world a better place, not only by inviting people into our church community, not only by programs that alleviate suffering, but also by inviting people to be simply and deeply well. Awe and its elements have a role in that wellbeing and spiritual communities can create events and opportunities for the greater community to experience this. However, to become purveyors of awe, we need to discover it for ourselves. This Lent is about that pursuit and situating this quest in our living faith tradition.

On Ash Wednesday, we will begin by considering beauty. We are often in awe of beauty. But beauty is complex and can be many things. We call something “achingly beautiful” when it creates a pathos within us—a sense of something so precious that we want it to last forever—from the plump cheeks of a newborn to the wrinkled face of an elder. But alas, we are all mortal and not meant to exist in this bodily form forever. We were made from dust and to dust we shall return. We will open ourselves to the awe that is the beauty of life in between the first and last breath.

Then, after beginning our beautiful journey with Jesus on Ash Wednesday, each week of Lent will focus on a different element of awe. In Sunday worship and in our Wednesday evening programs led by a diverse group of “purveyors of awe” in their own respective fields, we will contemplate the following elements: wonder, meaning, curiosity, delight, and connection. A scientist, poet, spiritual director, juggler, and cook will guide us! My intention is to explore these themes of awe theologically, biblically, creatively, and through the lived experience of those presenting our Wednesday Lenten programs. You are invited to participate in all aspects of this Lenten journey for a deeper experience.

Last, on Palm Sunday we will explore the concept of self-giving. Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem was an act of self-giving and moral beauty as he continued his ministry of lifting up the lowly and advocating for peace and justice. Studies show that when we witness with awe others’ kindness, courage, strength, and overcoming, we are more likely to feel inspired to give ourselves in service of the good. We become more self-giving, more ready to lend a helping hand or commit energy to making the world a better place. The awesome nature of moral beauty, as reflected in the life of Jesus, will usher us into the events of Holy Week so precious to our faith.

Come Easter Sunday, my heartfelt prayer is that you will rise to the glorious news that Christ is risen with a brand-new sense of awe and wonder.



Ash Wednesday **March 5, 2025, 7pm in the Sanctuary**

Ash Wednesday begins the Christian season of Lent. Join us for this meaningful and beauty-filled service, including the imposition of ashes, as we begin the Lenten journey.

Our Kent UCC Ash Wednesday service will be held on Wednesday, March 5 at 7pm in the sanctuary.



Easter Egg Hunt

All of our beloved children are invited to an Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Sunday morning! Immediately following our worship service, our United Youth Force (UYF) group will host an Easter Egg Hunt on our front church lawn for our children and young families. In case of inclement weather (we hope not!), the Easter Egg hunt will take place inside our church building. Loads of fun is in store for our precious children on Easter morning as we celebrate new life in Christ!

Moderator's Message

by Kathy Robinson

Dear Church Friends,

Are you, like me, struggling to come to terms with this 2025 new year? Being so cold in Ohio that you just want to stay home and stay warm? Having had enough of politics, you'd like to avoid social media for the next two years? Trying not to worry about your mail bringing more bills and tax statements? Pondering over the charge that Rev. Amy gave to us on January 5th when we celebrated the arrival of the three wise men to the manger at Bethlehem? During that Sunday service, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, each of us chose a card with a printed word - a word which was to act as our guiding star for the coming new year.

Have you yet figured out your meaning to the "star word" that you chose on Epiphany Sunday? I've punched a hole in my card and hung it up over my bedroom door as a daily reminder, as Rev. Amy said, "to guide and inspire me during the year." I see it every morning, but, I will admit, mine *-resist-* is still puzzling me. What do I do with "resist?" I am too old to protest politically - did so back in the '70s when I was a student at KSU. Resist saying yes to all the requests, ads, and please for my help or financial aid? Resist doing all the 'shoulds' that I tell myself I ought to act on? *Resist* my love of chocolate? How can I "commit to following that star" as I heard Pastor Amy remind us again in her sermon on January 12th?

But...then! A friend to whom I had confided my word shared this with me...

And suddenly, I understood my star! (The Holy Spirit does work in mysterious ways). I can find joy in staying in from the cold- hibernating or reading in front of a warm fire. I can find some joy and reassurance that the country has some dedicated men and women serving in Congress who will make right moral decisions. I have family in church. Financially I am blessed; I have enough.

Might we all, as we ponder our own star, pray the prayer of St. Francis- a prayer of choices: options and resistance.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

Oh Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in loving that we are loved; and it is dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

May you all, this year, find some joy and meaning in your star.

Blessings, Kathy



Make a Joyful Noise

by Corey Fowler, director of music

Come sing with us! We invite ANY congregation member to join the choir for a one-day commitment for our "Make a Joyful Noise Sundays" on **March 2** (Transfiguration) and **June 8** (Pentecost).

Participants still sit with their families during worship and simply walk up to the chancel area to sing the anthem (no robe needed!). Please join us at 9:00 AM in the choir room on the dates listed above to rehearse a simple choir anthem.

Ask any choir member or Director of Music, Corey Fowler, with any questions.



Lent and Holy Week 2025

Kent United Church of Christ

Ash Wednesday Service

Wednesday, March 5, 7pm in the Sanctuary

Sundays in Lent

10am in the Sanctuary

Maundy Thursday Service

Thursday, April 17, 7pm in the Sanctuary

Good Friday Service

Friday, April 18, 7pm in the Sanctuary

An ecumenical collaboration with sister churches in Kent

Holy Saturday Prayer Vigil

After Good Friday's service, we will keep vigil as a congregation to commemorate Jesus' death and our hope for his resurrection.

Easter Sunday

Sunday, April 20, 10am in the Sanctuary

Bring your bells to worship so we can ring in the Resurrection!

Easter Egg Hunt for our children on the front lawn after worship!



**Wednesday Evening Soup Suppers at 6pm
and Lenten Programs at 7pm in VanMeter Hall**

"Wonder" with Dr. Jon Secaur, Professor Emeritus of Physics, KSU

Wednesday, March 12

"Meaning" with David Hassler, Wick Poetry Center

Wednesday, March 19

"Curiosity" with Rev. Sharon Garner, Belly of the Whale Ministries

Wednesday, March 26

"Delight" with Mark Peachock, Juggler

Wednesday, April 2

"Connection" with Natalia Koretska, Ukrainian Cook

Wednesday, April 9

Spiritual Self-Care: The Healing Balm of Silence and Prayer

The noise surrounding us has been deafening as of late. Even if we find the willpower to turn off the television or the radio, the noise of words—and more words—finds us on the covers of newspapers and online articles. Social media's ubiquitousness has an insidious power all its own, contributing to our anxiety, dread, and even depression.

Fred Rogers, Presbyterian minister and children's television producer of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* said, "I'm very concerned that our society is much more concerned with information than wonder, in noise rather than silence. How do we encourage reflection?" Mr. Rogers was deeply concerned about the impact of noise on society and the human psyche. He believed that we need more silence and wonder in our lives and that quiet moments can give the rest of life extra meaning.

Lent is a time of introspection, reflection, repentance, and renewal. During these upcoming 40 days of Lent, what might happen if you reclaimed spaces of silence as an act of resistance in your daily life?

You have been extended an invitation to give up social media this Lent. Giving up mindless scrolling, reacting, posting, and obsessing over the constant bombardment of "breaking" news would be a significant step toward more silence, more calm, and more peace in your life. The fast from social media, should you choose to do so, would mean focusing on something else in its place. That's how a Lenten fast works. Giving up social media means focusing the time and energy you would have spent engaging with it to spend more time with God, in prayer, on walks, listening to music, writing letters, cooking a meal, connecting with friends and family, serving the least of these in our community, and spending good, quality alone time with yourself.

To experience more awe and wonder in our lives, we need to make room for it. Take time to look for the everyday wonders and awesome acts that God is doing all around us. In the midst of so much turmoil, chaos, and overwhelm, we can choose another way. We have a choice as to what we consume! We can turn off the noise and tune into the presence of God and all that God is doing.

Beloved, I am here to accompany you on this spiritual journey. Whether entering the silence together, conversing about how God is moving through your life, or praying with and for one another, our country, and our world, I am with you and want nothing more than to be your spiritual companion—this Lent and always.

~ Pastor Amy



**Simple Soup Suppers on Lenten Wednesdays
6pm in VanMeter Hall**



Soup's On! Each Wednesday in Lent,
we will have a soup supper in VanMeter Hall at 6pm.

Our hosts are as follows:

March 12: Fellowship Ministry and the Hospitality & Membership Committee

March 19: Worship and Arts and Property Ministries

March 26: Outreach and Mental Health Ministries

April 2: The Deacons and Finance Ministry

April 9: Ukrainian Cook Natalia Koretska & Family with sous-chefs

Christian Education Ministry and the Green Team

The hosts will provide soups and bread.
Please bring your own table service (plates, bowls, utensils, etc.)
and a salad, side dish, or dessert to share.



Wednesday Evening Programs throughout Lent Programs at 7pm



Wednesday, March 12 - "Wonder"

Dr. Jon Secaur, Professor Emeritus of Physics, Kent State University

In keeping with the importance of the number seven in all ancient cultures — and Jon will explain why they all chose seven — he will share seven awesome ideas. You could call it 'Seven Astonishments' with a nod to Mary Oliver's great advice on living a life.

Jon has taught for more than 50 years, with 6 years at Crestwood High School, 29 at Kent Roosevelt High School, and 42+ at Kent State University (overlapping, of course – he's not that old!). Jon retired from Kent State in September 2022 but has come back "off the bench" this year because he missed teaching! He enjoys gardening, reading, and making and fixing stuff around the house. Jon loves dogs, likes to sing, and has written some songs and quite a

few lyrics for church hymns and events. His PhD is in Educational Theory, so he has been the teaching specialist in the Physics department.



Wednesday, March 19 - "Meaning"

David Hassler, Executive Director of the Wick Poetry Center

Building on the previous week's discussion of "wonder," we will explore how we can "play" with language through poetry and make meaning that connects us to deeper, spiritual truths in our lives. The ancient Japanese poets called that moment of surprise in a poem, "ahaness." All of us, young and old, have the capacity to discover these moments through the memorable language and leaping thought of a poem. The Greek word for poem, *poiema*, means "a made thing." In this participatory program, David will share stories and poems from the Wick Poetry Center's outreach program and we will have the opportunity to play with language and be makers of our own meaning.

Kent UCC's very own David Hassler is the Bob and Walt Wick Executive Director of the Wick Poetry Center at Kent State University and the author or editor of ten books of poetry

and nonfiction. He cofounded *Traveling Stanzas*, a community arts project which brings poetry to the most urgent and evolving needs of our communities through expressive writing interventions, interactive exhibits, and digital platforms. Hassler has received the Ohio Poet of the Year, the Ohioana Book Award, and the Carter G. Woodson Honor Book Award.



Wednesday, March 26 - "Curiosity"

Rev. Sharon Seyfarth Garner, Belly of the Whale Ministries

Through experiential and creative practices, Sharon will explore spiritual curiosity with us. She believes that:

A little curiosity moves us deeper into the lives of the people around us.

A little curiosity leads to opportunities we never knew existed.

A little curiosity, if focused on Jesus, will make us more like him.

When we make curiosity a spiritual practice, we open up to new ways of knowing God and knowing ourselves as well. Come and discover the power of asking questions, deepening our spiritual curiosity, and using our imaginations to enter the Gospel story.

Rev. Sharon Seyfarth Garner is a spiritual director, retreat leader, author and United Methodist pastor. She is the Founding Director of Belly of the Whale Spiritual Direction & Retreat Ministries that celebrated its 10th anniversary last year. She has published two books on contemplative coloring as an invitation to deeper prayer (*Praying with Mandalas: A Colorful, Contemplative Practice* AND *Mandalas, Candles and Prayer: A Simply Centered Advent*) and has shared this practice widely including workshops at Spiritual Directors International, the Wild Goose Festival, a school in Liberia and a women's prison in Cleveland. In addition to her M.Div, Sharon also holds graduate certificates in Spiritual Direction ...

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(Ignatian Spirituality Institute, John Carroll University), Diversity Management (Cleveland State University) and Ecumenical Studies (World Council of Churches). Perhaps more importantly, however, Sharon cherishes opportunities to savor this wild and wonderful gift of life by getting dirt from the garden under her fingernails, spending time in sacred silence, taking long walks with her dog and life partner, singing loudly, and searching for the world's best wood-fired pizza (recommendations welcome!).



Wednesday, April 2 - "Delight"

Mark Peachock, Juggler

When was the last time you were truly delighted by something? Do you remember the first time you saw someone juggle? We experience awe through delighting in play. By sharing his delight of juggling and making others laugh, Mark Peachock will invite us to be awestruck at his high energy performance. Then, after his professional presentation, we will learn how to juggle alongside Mark. Come to discover what it means to engage in "holy play" by trying something new, laughing out loud, and delighting in others.

Mark grew up right here in Kent, Ohio, where he taught himself how to juggle (it WAS before the internet, after all). Once he saw how quickly he mastered the art, he knew the sky was the limit. Within just a few years, Mark had won three gold medals and a World Championship in international competition. This, in turn, ignited a professional career that has led him, over the past 20 years, to countries as far away as Japan, China, Italy, Spain, and England - in addition to states all across America. Mark Angelo Peachock and

his wife Marlo perform locally and nationally, as well as around the world. They live in Hudson, Ohio.



Wednesday, April 9 - "Connection"

Natalia Koretska, Ukrainian Refugee and Cook

Through teaching us traditional Ukrainian recipes and cooking together, Natalia will help us connect to one another. From prepping and chopping to sitting down to eat together, we will experience the awesomeness of "connection" with those of a different culture and language as well as with each other. Natalia and her family are so excited to share with Kent UCC that they couldn't land on just one title for their Lenten program.

So here are many to entice you to join us:

Come and learn Ukrainian kitchen with Chef Natalia!

Discover unique Ukrainian kitchen recipes with Chef Natalia!

We have enough recipes to make cooking your hobby!

Chef Natalia's recipes will open new sensations for your taste buds!

Chef Natalia will teach you the art of Ukrainian home-cooking!

Natalia Koretska is from the beautiful country of Ukraine. She and her husband Nick met at the Reformed Seminary of Ukraine. After they married, God called them to serve in the planting of a new church in the city of Oleshky in southern Ukraine. They have three children, all of whom are in high school now. Natalia is a kindergarten and Sunday school teacher. She loves to paint, cross-stitch, knit, fold origami, and try new recipes. When the war began in Ukraine three years ago, friends of theirs were able to rescue them and bring them to the U.S., right here in Kent. Here they try to serve the church and the American people. They want to offer Christ's love to the people around them, and also to share their experience, what they know, and their skills and interests!

Did you know?

Palm Sunday is April 13 this year. Did you know we use EcoPalms? They are sustainably grown and harvested in Guatemala and Mexico. All of the harvesting communities either have or are in the process of obtaining an outside sustainable certification from SmartWood, a division of Rainforest Alliance. The forests in which these palms reside are being protected from agriculture and logging because of the palms residence. (source, EcoPalms.org)





Order your Easter Flowers today.
Deadline is: March 23

Please fill in the form below as you would like it printed in the church bulletin.

Flowers given by...

(your name)

☐ in honor of...

☐ in memory of...

☐ Single 6" White Lily

Qty _____

☐ 6" Yellow Daffodils

Qty _____

☐ 6" Tulips (color choices below)

Red

Qty _____

Purple

Qty _____

Orange

Qty _____

Pink

Qty _____

Yellow

Qty _____

☐ 6" Hyacinth (color choices below)

Blue

Qty _____

Pink

Qty _____

White

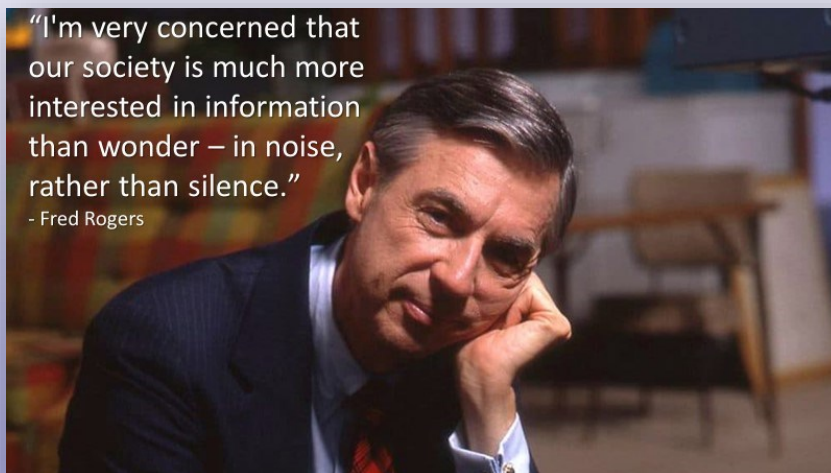
Qty _____

Cost: \$9.50/plant

Total \$ _____

Please make checks payable to Kent UCC.

All orders must be paid in full and accompanied by the above form and returned to the church office.

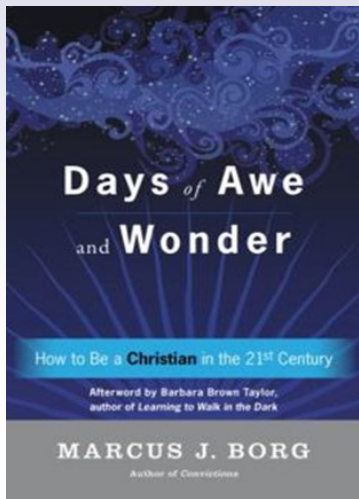


Suggested Reading for our Lenten Journey

In addition to Sunday worship, special Lenten services, and our Wednesday evening programs, here are some additional books to enrich your observance of Lent, deepen your understanding of awe, and encourage you and your family to become purveyors of awe. There are reading recommendations for adults, youth, and children, all of which could be read at any time of year, not only during Lent. May you savor moments alone or with others with a good book this spring.

Books on Awe & Wonder for Adults

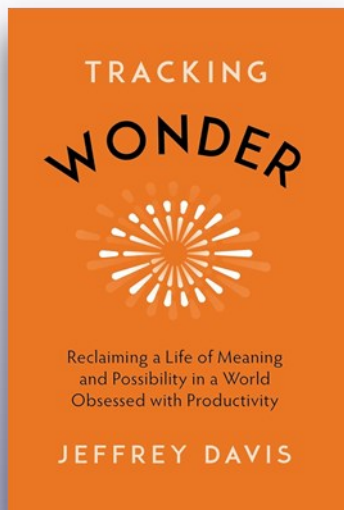
Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life by Dacher Keltner is a captivating new study about the science of awe and how it impacts our lives. An accessible and enjoyable read, this book is the primary inspiration for our worship series.



Days of Awe and Wonder: How to Be a Christian in the 21st Century by Marcus Borg showcases some of Borg's most enduring and insightful writings, including many previously unpublished works, a concise and illuminating introduction to Marcus J. Borg, the late spokesman for progressive Christianity and one of the most revered and influential theologians of our time.

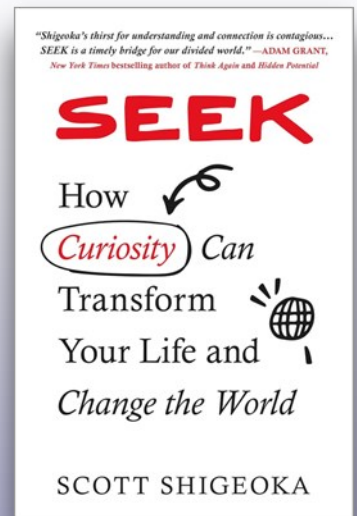
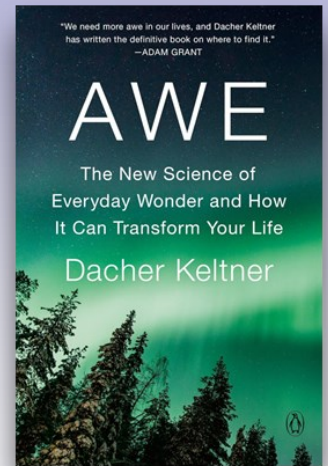
A leading scholar of the historical Jesus acclaimed for his ability to speak about Christianity in the context of contemporary society, Borg offered profound wisdom and inspiration--a new way of seeing and living the Christian life--for believers, students, and lay readers. Ultimately, he taught us that by developing a deeper understanding of Jesus and the New Testament, we can discover a more authentic way of being. Yet Borg himself was always conscious of a greater truth beyond what he could explain: the wonder of God. Provocative and uplifting, this anthology illuminates Borg's explorations of the miraculous and wonderful, his understanding of conviction and fulfillment, and his contention that we must keep an open mind and question as-

sumptions and certainties in all our religious journeys.

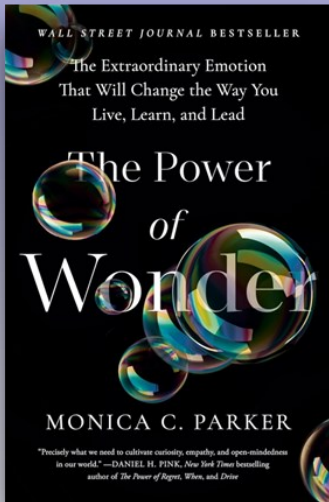


Tracking Wonder: Reclaiming a Life of Meaning and Possibility in a World Obsessed with Productivity by Jeffrey Davis takes a step back from the clamor of voices extolling the virtues of hyper-productivity and the "hustle and grind" mentality that pervades our capitalist society. This book is about recognizing wonder as a pivotal force for ingenuity and change, inviting us to reclaim awe and curiosity as natural and necessary parts of our everyday lives.

Seek: How Curiosity Can Transform Your Life and Change the World by Scott Shigeoka addresses the feelings of disconnection and alienation that many of us experience in the our hyper-connected age of technology. Shigeoka proposes a model for approaching the world and our relationships with others with open-eyed curiosity and intentional receptivity.

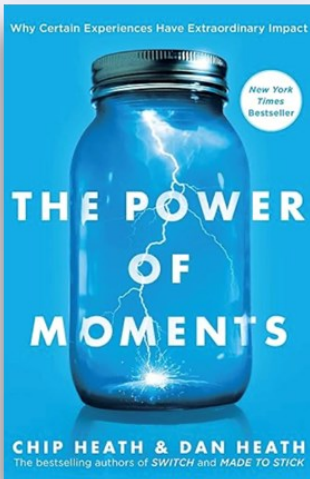
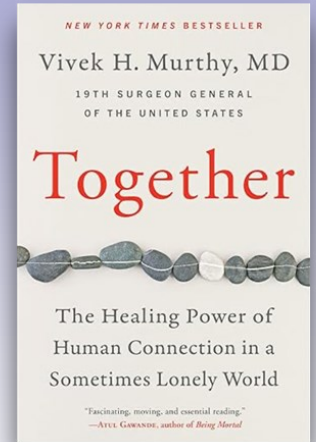


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The Power of Wonder by Monica C. Parker explores the human experience of wonder and illustrates its importance as a cornerstone of a healthy emotional, intellectual, and social life. Parker takes a broad look at the impact of wonder on many different aspects of human existence and provides practical suggestions for incorporating this emotion into our daily lives.

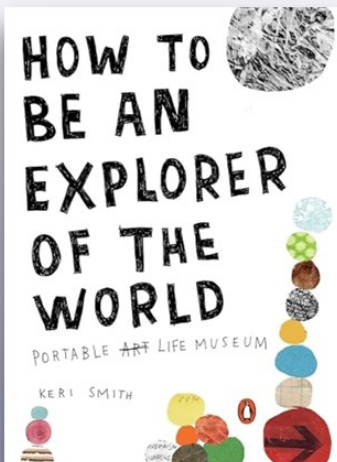
Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World is a powerful book by Vivek H. Murthy, MD, 19th Surgeon General of the United States. The study describes the impact of loneliness on our physical, mental, and social health, along with guidance for how we can prioritize important relationships and strengthen our sense of connection and belongingness.



The Power of Moments: Why Certain Experiences Have Extraordinary Impact by Chip Heath and Dan Heath examines the curious longevity and impact of simple moments that stick with us forever. What makes a moment meaningful, and why do certain memories carry the power to shape our identities and influence our whole lives?

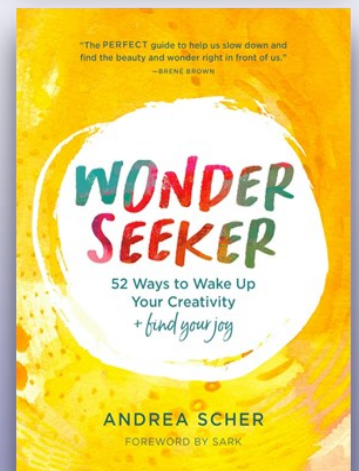
Books and Resources on Awe & Wonder for Pre-Teens, Teens, and Young Adults

The Awe Factor: How a Little Bit of Wonder Can Make a Big Difference in Your Life is a book about being awestruck and exploring the meaning and benefits of “awe” and “wonder” for our everyday lives.

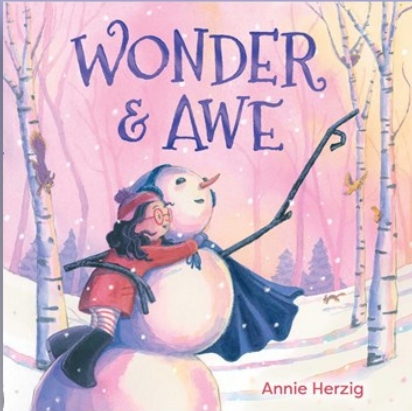


How to Be an Explorer of the World by Keri Smith is a guided journal that function as a “portable life museum.” Capture observations about the world around you and let your curiosity guide you into deeper understandings of yourself and your place in the universe.

Wonder Seeker: 52 Ways to Wake Up Your Creativity and Find Your Joy by Andrea Scher is a book of imaginative prompts designed to spark your sense of wonder and ignite new curiosities about the world. This looks like a good potential resource for intergenerational discussions and activities for pre-teens, teens, youth, and adults.

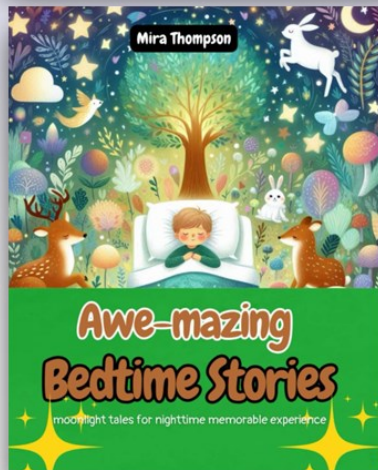
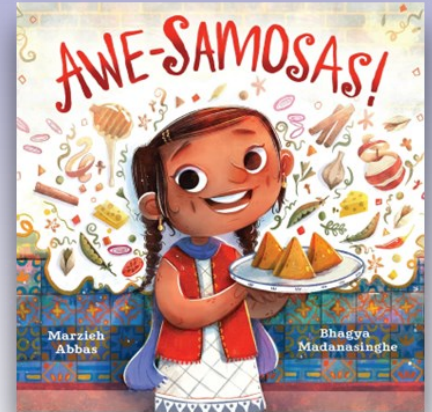


Books on Awe & Wonder for Children



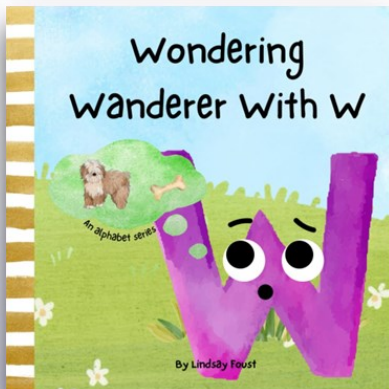
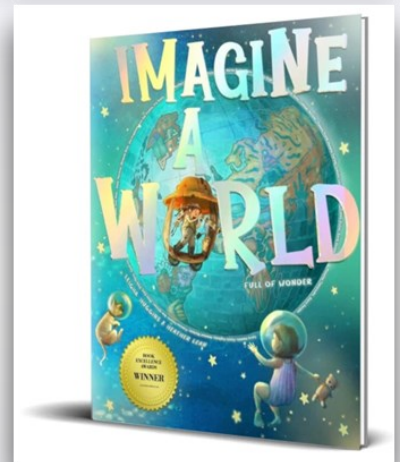
Wonder and Awe is a picture book written and illustrated by Anne Herzig that tells the story of a young girl and her magical snow friend, Wonder. Eventually spring comes and Wonder melts away... but as the little girl discovers, our sense of Wonder can always return.

Awe-Samosas is the delightful story of Noor, a young Pakistani girl who decides to make her Dadijaan's (grandmother's) delicious samosas. But without the family recipe, Noor has to improvise! We especially like this story's uplifting message of Noor using creativity and problem-solving to persevere in the face of the challenges she encounters.



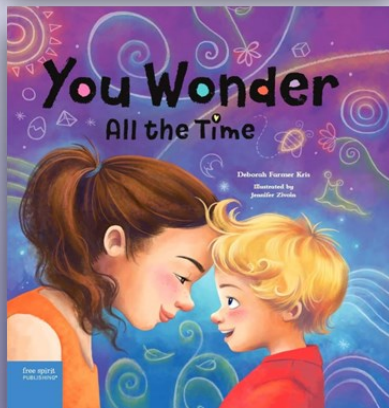
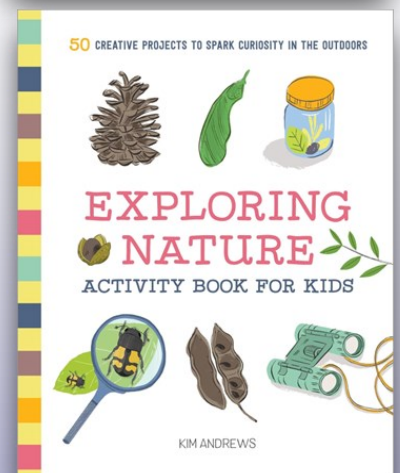
Awe-mazing Bedtime Stories by Mira Thompson is a collection of bedtime stories that captures glimmers of magic and charming stories. Designed for children ages 2-6.

Imagine a World: Full of Wonder is a unique book by Heather Lean and Leigha Huggins that features inspiring images from 23 different illustrators. This book encourages imagination, dreaming, and creativity.



Wondering Wanderer with W is a rhyming story for children about curiosity and exploration. Letter W embraces the call to adventure but soon finds himself lost in the woods. This story affirms that curiosity and problem-solving are good and enriching gifts for humans to utilize, alongside the message that it's OK to ask for help when we are facing challenges.

Exploring Nature: Activity Book for Kids by Kim Andrews is full of outdoor and indoor activity ideas to inspire kids to observe nature and learn about the world around them. Ideal for kids aged 5-9.



You Wonder All the Time, written by Deborah Farmer Kris and illustrated by Jennifer Zivoin is a book that affirms a child's natural propensity for asking questions! Kids ask a lot of questions because they are curious about the world and want to understand it. This rhyming storybook celebrates imagination and asking questions as good and wonderful gifts.

Spiritual Growth Opportunities

“Dwelling in the Word” Bible Study
Every second Thursday of the month
2pm in the Chapel



*“Let the word of Christ dwell in
you richly;
teach and admonish one another in all wisdom;
and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms,
hymns, and spiritual songs to God.” ~Colossians 3:16*

Join Pastor Amy for a new Bible study. “Dwelling in the Word” will meet every second Thursday of the month at 2pm in the Chapel. Together we will explore the lectionary passage of the week, ask questions, offer insights, and listen for the Spirit speaking to us through the scripture. We will meet for an hour. Our next Bible Study is Thursday, March 13. All are welcome!

Evening Prayer Services **Every third Wednesday of the month** **7pm in the Chapel**

Join us for our next contemplative prayer service to bask in the sacred silence, hear God’s word, pray together, and sing Taizé chants. Each service includes a special ritual action for personal prayer and reflection. There will be no service during Lent so we can attend the Wednesday evening Lenten programs. We will resume on Wednesday, May 21.



Space for Grace Prayer Group **Every Tuesday at 7:30am on Zoom**

Space for Grace, our contemplative and intercessory prayer group meets on Tuesdays at 7:30am. We meet on Zoom. Please contact Pastor Amy to indicate your interest and she will send you the Zoom link. You do not need to commit to attending every week; you are welcome to come as you are able.

**“Hate cannot drive out hate.
Only love can do that.”**
Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King



**Neighbors, are you concerned about
American democracy, the economy and
the plight of vulnerable Americans?**

Join the discussion!

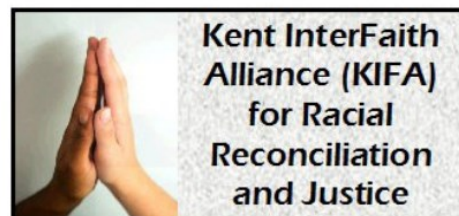
- . How will Federal changes impact our local community?**
- . How do we want to respond to critical concerns?**

Saturday, March 15, 2025

10:00—11:30 AM

**Kent United Church of Christ
1400 E. Main St., Kent
Parking behind church**

A program of KIFA



Know Your Church

by Al Barber, and the Safety Committee

The Safety Committee has recently submitted updated floor plans (upper and lower floors) of the church building to local Fire and Police agencies. They have been updated to include numbered entry /Egress locations to help facilitate emergency responders. We have identified four entrances and exit locations as follows:

- 1= Upper-Level Main Sanctuary entrance
- 2= Upper-Level Chapel/Choir entrance
- 3= Lower Level Van Meter Parking lot entrance
- 4= Lower Level Classroom/Library entrance

Appropriately numbered signs visible from the street will be placed at those locations. These floor plans are also posted in strategic locations throughout the church



Kent UCC Safety Monitors

A Safety Committee was formed in May 2019 and worked during the pandemic to develop policies and priorities with a final report to Council in December 2020. One of the recommendations in this report was to form a Safety Team which was started in the fall of 2023.

This team has been working to implement other recommendations from the report including a team of Safety Monitors to improve safety and security during church services and other large gatherings in the church.

The safety monitors and ushers have been trained as follows (links to these trainings are available for any church member. Please click below):

- [AED and First Aid](#)
- [Mental Health De-Escalation](#)
- [Run, Hide, Fight and Emergency Preparation](#)
- [The Power of Hello](#)

Procedures for Safety Monitors have been developed

These are basic recurring procedures for Sunday and Special Services.

Arrive 20 min before start of service and walk interior hallways to monitor proper lighting and entrance points.

During the service walk interior hallways and secure all doors with exception of main door leading to sanctuary by 10:15AM.

The safety monitors and ushers should approach all guests using the Power of Hello training procedures and, if necessary, alert other team members to any safety or security concerns.

During Sunday School double check downstairs doors and hallways. Acknowledge at least one Sunday School Teacher.

After the service secure all entrances.

Check all non-security lighting is out.

Walk all halls and classrooms for final safety checks.

Our safety monitors include Gary Harrington, Pat Ray, Scott Baughman, Al Barber, and Jeff Roeger.

If you are interested in learning more about our safety team or volunteering as a safety monitor contact Al Barber at: albertbarber@gmail.com or 330-603-0166 (cell)

Kent Social Services Easter Baskets for Children

Kent Social Services will distribute Easter baskets for children ages 2-10 again this year. Outreach will be collecting for children's Easter baskets (for ages 2 - 10) between March 9 and April 13. Details to follow in the weekly update and bulletin.



Spring Ecumenical Choir Concert

March 23, 4pm

United Methodist Church of Kent

Join us for an afternoon of singing! The choirs of Kent UCC, the United Methodist Church, and the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will perform choral works and hymns, directed by our very own Corey Fowler and Frank Wiley.

Social Justice

by Barb Hanniford

The Social Justice Ministry has had a busy few months, sponsoring three "The Law and Our Neighbor" programs, holding the Third Annual Blues & BBQ dinner, participating in Akron Pride, helping with the peace vigil for Palestine this fall, and sponsoring the screening of *Where Olive Trees Weep* in January (picture to right). To help focus our future priorities, we're surveying the congregation on topics of highest interest. Copies were distributed prior to the Annual Meeting and are available in the narthex. Please complete a survey and watch for upcoming programs.

Global Ministries is a joint witness in mission between the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Its website is an excellent source of news and action alerts regarding Israel and Palestine. The following information is drawn from Global Ministries news.



As the calendar has flipped to 2025, and with the announcement of a cease fire deal, Israel's decimation of Gaza has continued. In November 2024, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli officials and Palestinian Hamas leaders.



On January 9, the US House of Representatives passed the "Illegitimate Court Counteraction Act" (**HR 23**), a **bill that** "would sanction any officials with the court, or entities supporting the ICC, who seek to investigate, arrest or detain any U.S. citizen or citizen of an allied country." It is now headed to the Senate, **amid opposition** by many churches, faith-based groups, and other civil society agencies.

A ceasefire is only a first step. It will not immediately end the horrible conditions in which Palestinians live. Israel's leaders must be held accountable for their crimes, and the ICC is the appropriate body to do so. Contact your Senators and urge them to **oppose this bill, and to allow the ICC to fulfill its function as an independent source of justice, upholding international law**, which is necessary to ensure the implementation of a ceasefire.

Faith Formation

by Rev. Emily Culp Ashby, associate minister for faith formation

J-Walkers

Our middle school fellowship group is meeting on the second Sunday of each month after worship, from 11:30-1pm. We have youth attending that represent 3 different churches: Kent UCC, First Christian DOC, and Christ Episcopal. It is so fun to see them build relationships and forge connections across denominational lines. In January, we met at First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), ate lunch together, and played Minute to Win it Games – the youth had fun thinking of their own versions of some of the games!

In February, First Christian Church invited the youth to participate in their Souper Bowl Sunday Soup Cook-Off. This event is a contest for the best soup – anyone can participate by bringing a crockpot of soup, or taste-test and vote for your favorites! The youth will help count the votes, announce the winner and help with clean up after the event. In the spirit of Souper Bowl, we will also took up a collection of canned goods to place in the Blessing Box at KUCC.



Sunday School

During the first few weeks of February, Sunday School children decorated Have a Heart Bags. These bags were given to members of the congregation to fill with items for Kent Social Services. On Feb 17 at 10am, children were invited to join members of the outreach team to deliver the 82 bags to Kent Social Services.

Pray-ground: A Worship Space for Children!

At KUCC we believe that the way we welcome children in worship directly affects the way they respond to God, the church, and to one another. To welcome children just as they are (wiggles and all!), we've created a space called a Pray-Ground – located in the front left side of the sanctuary. A “pray-ground” is a designated space for younger children (birth to 2nd or 3rd grade), allowing them to fully experience and feel a part of worship. And there are so many benefits to children remaining in worship! Here are just a few:

- Research shows that children who attend worship regularly from a young age are more likely to remain involved in church (even more than attending Sunday

School or Youth Group)

- Young children learn by observing the world around them. They need exposure to the power of rituals and traditions, hymns, and prayers on a regular basis. Over time children are incorporated into the mystery and the “language” of worship

Initially, the Pray-ground will include a small table, chairs, and age appropriate materials to help the children engage in worship. This is a flexible space; over time we will adapt it based on our needs and use. Pastor Emily received a grant from the Lily Foundation through the UCC National Setting to implement a Pray-ground in our worship space.

The Pray-ground will not take the place of our nursery or Sunday School. It will be available for use during worship at all times for parents with infants or children who prefer to remain in worship. On Whole Body Sundays, when we do not have Sunday School so that children and youth can participate in worship, Sunday school teachers and Pastor Emily will monitor the Pray-ground. Parents, you do not need to sit with your children in the Pray-ground – though as we are rolling this out, we ask that you sit nearby in the pews initially so children can come back to you in the pews as they want.

If you have any questions about the Pray-ground or how it will be used, please talk to Pastor Emily – pastoremily@kentucc.org.

continued on p. 18

Whole Body

In the past, Whole Body Sundays have been the 5th Sunday of a month (which equates to just 3-4 times a year). We want children to have a more frequent, regular exposure to worship – so we are increasing Whole Body Sundays to the first Sunday of every month! This means that children can take communion in worship with the whole congregation!

UYF

Our high school youth group meets every Sunday evening from 5-7pm! The youth are busy planning several fundraisers coming up in the Spring – including a Shrimp Boil on March 1! We are excited to re-establish our connection with Back Bay Mission. James Pennington, the executive director of Back Bay Mission (and a UCC pastor!) will be joining us for the shrimp boil and to preach in service on March 2! The money generated from the shrimp boil will go towards our next Mission Trip this summer with the Appalachia Service Project.



A Blessing for Anxious Times

May the peace of God give you renewed
hope and wisdom,

May you find the strength you already carry
within you to be enough,

May the grace of God be sufficient,

May you find a deep breath when the air
around you is thin,

May you grow in compassion in these days,

May you love well, not in spite of these anxious times
but because of them.

~adapted from Sarah Bessey



Outreach

by Donna Hess

"Mercy to the needy is a loan to God, and God pays back those loans in full." Proverbs 19:17



Outreach began 2025 happily distributing \$1802 to the UCC Veterans of the Cross, \$1054 to the United Church of Christ Zimbabwe's Gazaland University project, and \$1076.13 to the Phyllis Zumkehr Clothing Center. The money given to Gazaland University combined with the donation given by our congregation earlier in 2024 will total \$3000 dollars and will allow us to have a brick with our name on it in a section honoring important donors.

As Outreach looks ahead, we know, as always, the need will be great, locally, nationally, and internationally. We will be volunteering at both the clothing center and at Kent Social Services. And we will continue to help those in need, especially our local partners, whenever and wherever we can. Nationally helping those who have been deeply impacted by the California wildfires will be something Outreach will take action on soon. Internationally we continue to be concerned about the genocide in Palestine, the war in Ukraine, and the suffering in Sudan and Syria. Outreach will work with Church World Services to look for ways to help.

As we continue to work with Church World Services on projects that will touch the lives of those who need our help, we are planning a "blanket" Sunday on Mother's Day, April 11. And this fall we will be gathering supplies for period packs. These go to young women in underdeveloped countries who do not have the needed supplies to help with their menstrual cycle. As a result, during their monthly cycles, they are ostracized and ignored. The Church World Services distributes these throughout the world making a significant difference in the lives of young women. Watch for more information on both of these programs in future Messengers and the weekly updates.

We said goodbye to long-time member, Georgeanne Hoover, whose many contributions to our ministry were much appreciated. She will continue to be an important part of our church as a Deacon and member of the Green Team. But we are very excited to welcome two new members, Marilyn Sorrick and Elliot Bennett. Here's to a helpful, impactful 2025 as we do God's work where it's most needed.

One Great Hour of Sharing Special Offering

Being a "Five for Five" church, our first of the special offerings for the year, One Great Hour of Sharing, will be received on Sunday, March 30, 2025.

One Great Hour of Sharing, part of Our Church's Wider Mission, is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that carries God's message of love and hope to people in crisis. The UCC works with international partners to provide sources of clean water, food, education and health care, small business micro-credit, advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons, and emergency relief and rehabilitation. One Great Hour of Sharing also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response.



Over fifty-five percent (55%) of the UCC's offering supports international development initiatives. The offering also funds refugee resettlement, disaster preparedness and response, and disaster-related volunteer initiatives in the U.S. and internationally.

The United Church of Christ responds to humanitarian and development needs in the world. Specifically, the UCC supports sustainable development and refugee needs internationally and provides disaster relief and immigration assistance in the United States. The United Church of Christ responds as a member of organizations such as Church World Service and the ACT Alliance. We also support the direct mission efforts of churches and church-based organizations that the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have direct partnerships with through Global Ministries. Nearly one-fifth of the UCC's OGHS offering is shared through Church World Service to support refugee, and disaster programs worldwide. (source: ucc.org/giving)

Watch for the envelopes in your Sunday bulletins in March.

Hospitality and Membership by Eileen West & Gayle Wall

Our Hospitality and Membership Committee facilitated another small group dinner experience on Saturday January 25.

"Soups On...Second Helping" was the theme and seemed appropriate for a cold winters night. Thanks you to our host

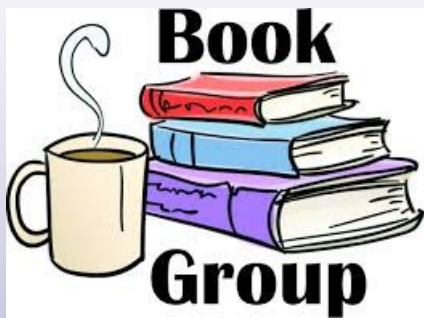
couples: the Baughmans, the Hannifords, the Markens, and the Pecks. About 30 members and guests enjoyed food, fellowship and fun.

We are seeking GREETERS for our Sunday services. This is an easy way to contribute to worship and meet people at the same time. Please consider signing up for a Sunday or two. There is a Sign UP Genius in every weekly update, you can also sign up with Gayle Wall, or you can sign up [here](#). We will remind you of your Sunday a couple of days before.

H & M plans on hosting a prospective new member class in the next couple of months...stay tuned and stay warm.



Book Group by Kathy Robinson



The church book group is still alive and reading despite the winter's ice and snow, and meets the third Saturday of each month.

The book for March 15th will be *James*, by Percival Everett- the retelling of the Huck Finn story through the eyes of Jim, the runaway slave who accompanies Huck on his raft. April's book group will meet on the 12th due to Easter and be discussing *The Women* by Kristen Hannah- a novel about the women

who served in the armed Forces during the Vietnam war.

The book group is open to any interested church member who enjoys reading a variety of book genres. We gather from noon to roughly 2PM in the chapel and ask that you bring a dish to share for our potluck lunch, your own table setting, and ideas to discuss. We are always looking for new members. Hope some of you will join us.

Happy reading, Kathy



Treasurer's Note
by Bill Hoover, treasurer

It's 2025: Time to Push Reset

2024 was an amazing year at Kent UCC. We were definitely up to something good all year. We continued to grow our ministries in many areas. From our ministerial staff to program offerings by our WISE, Social Justice, Creation Justice, the Rummage Sale and others. We continued to improve our church property and security and successfully completed our first financial audit in many years. Like the story in the Bible about the parts of the body, our efforts take the work of many people and we could not accomplish everything we do without all of you.

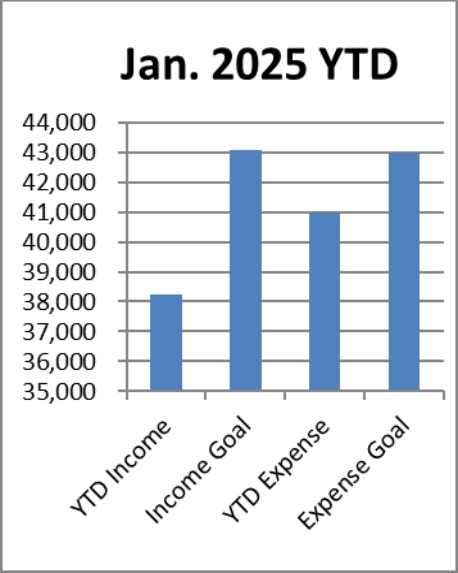
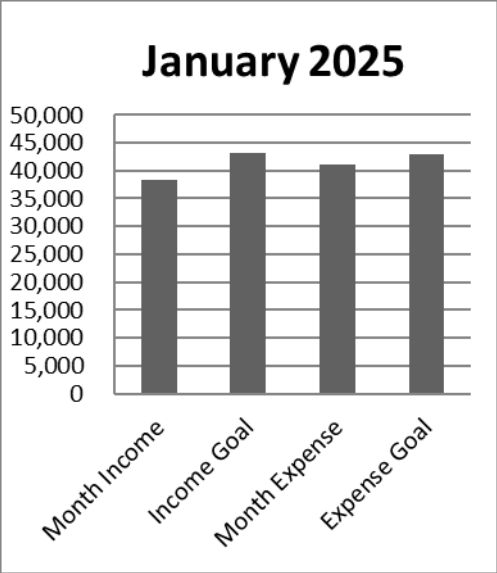
Of course many different resources contributed to our successes. Some of our financial highlights included: Faith Offerings (pledged and unpledged) along with "Where Most Needed" gifts exceeded the budget, and total income was up about \$14,000 over plan. As a result our year-end deficit was only \$3,000 compared to the \$16,000 that was budgeted.

Any of you who are sports fans know that after any big win the coach always says something like "We'll take a day or two to savor and celebrate the win, and then get back to work for the next game." And so it is with us. We're now a month into 2025, and it's time to press the "reset" button. There is much yet to do in the coming year and many people and resources will be needed to accomplish our goals.

Blessings to you all, and thanks for all you do for the Church,
Bill Hoover, Treasurer

January 2025 operating income of \$38,260 was \$4,825 **below** the monthly income need. Operating expenses for the month were \$40,995 resulting in a **deficit** of (\$2,735) in January. We look forward with great anticipation to the New Year and the energy with which we will advance our ministries and missions; as well as in prayer to a theology of generosity. Contact the Church office to find out how to sign up for automatic monthly giving.

Offerings may also be made online by clicking [here](#), mailed to the Church, or sent from your bank's online system.



Mental Health Ministry
by Jackie Peck

Sometimes we just need to feel safe. ALL of us.

Our Stigma-Free door signs, Sunday services, Pastor Amy's Wednesday night prayer service, Sunday School, UYF and Jay-Walkers gatherings, Space 4 Grace, and community meals are some of the ways we offer safe space. There will be more to come.

May you find what you need to feel safe, to feel God's love.

PROUD TO BE
STIGMA-FREE

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!



February

2: Jim Silver, Dick Symons 3: Anna Mae Pyle 4: Roger Mize 5: Paul Smith
9: Ruth Saltzman 10: Bruce Moore 11: Scott Baughman, Bentley Wall
13: Odin Amador-Gorby, Kim Drumm, Marilyn Freeman, 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: Andrew Ledebur, Mark Polcha 20: Annie Geraghty
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

March

4: Sue Otterson, Rhuna Wall 5: Jeff Lowery, Lydia Lumpkin 7: Stephanie Phillips 8: Sally Crane, Steve Luke
11: Audrey Coyne, Madeleine Gordon, Melissa Polcha, Justin Wallace 12: Phil Otterson 14: Marcus Seifert
15: Debbie Barber, Heidi Cannon, Paul Sellman 16: Pat Ray 17: Linda Morris 19: Noah Dunlap, Ellen Hardgrove,
David Myers 23: Stephen Brown, Daniel Coyne, Sophia Hayden, Wayne Schneider, Laura Smith 25: Emily Hansford,
Cara Ledebur 27: Kay Leppo 28: Annie Marie Carro L'Harrigan

April

1: Meghan Dietz, Matthew Redman 3: Becky Moyseenko, Linnea Ray 4: Sean Hoover 7: Heidi Bee 8: Carol Haas,
Fay Ann Sebaly 9: Leah Bennington 11: Rachel Robinson 13: Carolyn Galizio 15: Judy Mendenhall 16: Lauren Spence
17: Laurie Riddle 20: Rick Wise 23: Kristin Garner 24: Kim Sebaly 26: Joy Ann Leavy 27: Humberto Carro L'Harrigan
28: Amy Rickelman 30: Beth Sucharzewski, John West

If you have a birthday during one of these months, and you don't see your name, chances are we do not have it in our database. Please reach out to Leah in the church office at: LDavis@kentucc.org and let her know what it is. We want to celebrate you!

Instructions for
living a life:

Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it.

—Mary Oliver, from *Sometimes*

Let us not
grow weary
of doing
GOOD,
for ^{IN} ^{DUE} season
we will REAP,
IF WE DO NOT
give up.
GALATIANS 6:9

Meet Our Staff...



The Rev. Amy Gopp
Senior Pastor
pastoramy@kentucc.org



The Rev. Emily Culp Ashby
Associate Minister for Faith Formation
pastoreml@kentucc.org



Corey Fowler
Director of Music
cfowler1@kent.edu



Leah Davis
Office Administrator
LDavis@kentucc.org



Don Deibler
Custodian
office@kentucc.org

Council:

Moderator — Kathy Robinson
Vice Moderator — John Schinker
Treasurer — Bill Hoover
Clerk — Muriel Breyley
Diaconate — Judy Kletzien
Education — Heather Lohman
Fellowship — Jaime Baughman
Finance — Ralph Kletzien
Outreach — Donna Hess
Personnel — Al Barber
Property — Kirk Gordon
Stewardship — Crystal Shanley
Worship & the Arts — Felicia Lumpkin
Youth Representative — Jonah Baker
Member At Large — Dave Owen

Have a question for council? Contact
Kathy Robinson at:
kathyarobinson@gmail.com

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)



The Kent United Church of Christ is an Open and Affirming, Accessible to All, and W.I.S.E. (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged with persons living with mental health challenges and their families) Congregation.

Kent United Church of Christ
1400 E. Main Street, Kent, OH 44240
330.673.9534
kentucc.org

KENT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
SUNDAY SERVICE
10:00AM
kentucc.org * 330.673.9534



Office Hours:
M-F 9am-4pm

ONLINE WORSHIP/SOCIAL MEDIA



<https://bit.ly/3jVsNX7>



<https://www.facebook.com/KentUnitedChurchOfChrist>

GIVING

We appreciate your gifts to our church to help continue our mission. Did you know that you can also give online? Go to our website and click on the "donate" tab on our homepage. Or use this link: <https://kentucc.org/donate>

You can also bring your offering to church on Sunday morning, or send us a check to: 1400 E. Main Street, Kent, OH 44240

NEED TO CATCH UP?



Watch this week and the previous weeks worship and children's church on our website at: <https://kentucc.org/worship-online>

ONLINE CHURCH DIRECTORY

<https://engage.suran.com/kent-ucc/s/login>

CHANCEL FLOWERS

Do you have an anniversary, birthday, or important date coming up that you would like to commemorate? Donate chancel flowers for our Sunday morning worship service. Contact Sandy Roeger: rroeger@neo.rr.com for more information.

GET IN TOUCH

Do we have your updated information including your email address? We send out weekly updates to let our church family know of current events and resources. Please contact the church office at: office@kentucc.org or call: 330.673.9534 to update your information.

SUGGESTIONS?

Do you have suggestions for the next Messenger, an article you would like to write, or an idea for a column? We'd love to hear from you!

Contact Terri at:
tsilveruccmessenger@gmail.com

GET INVOLVED

Are you interested in joining the church? Would you like to get involved in a ministry or group but don't know who to contact? Would you like to help with events? Would you like to volunteer in the church office?

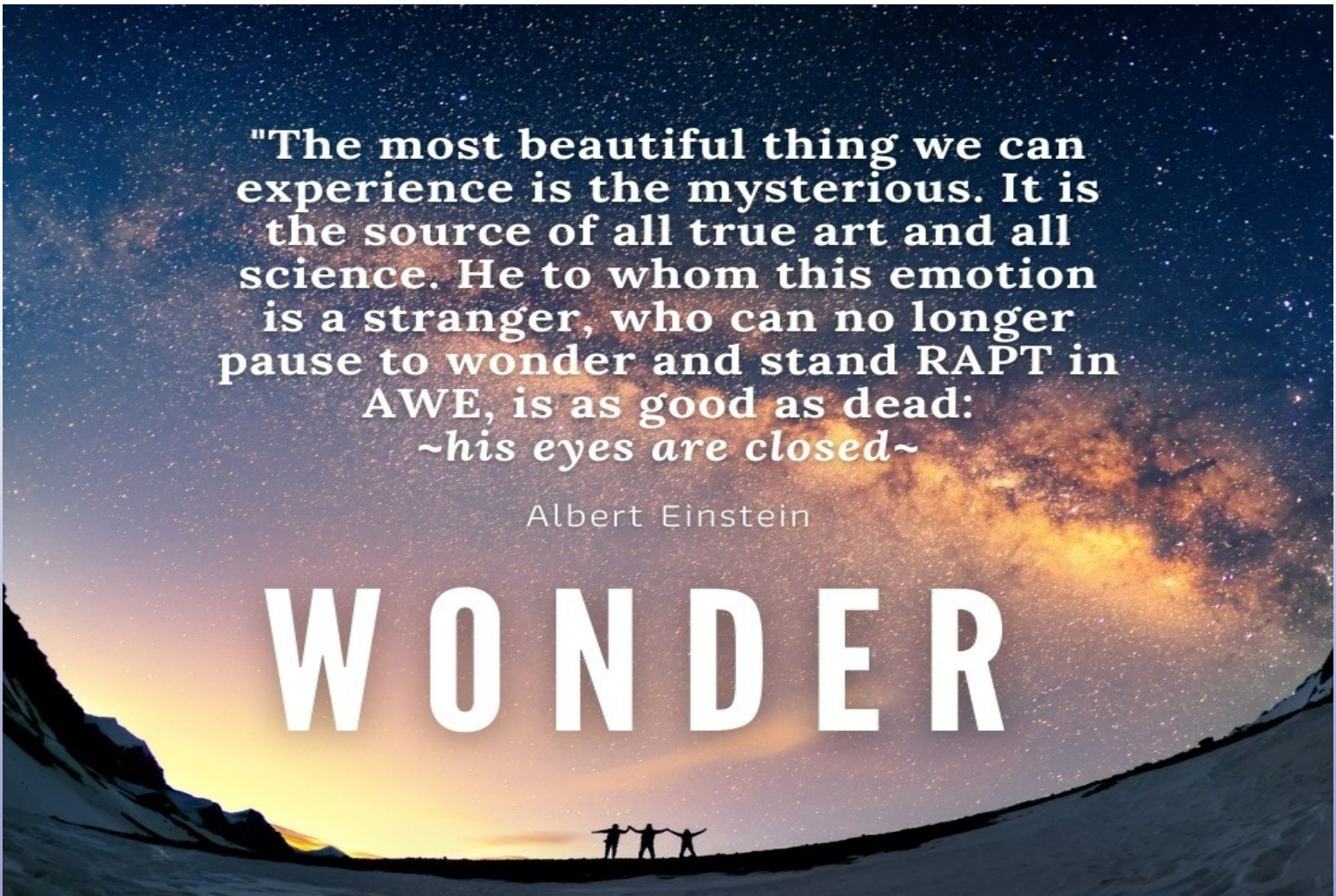
If you would like more information, please contact the church office at:
office@kentucc.org

Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome at Kent United Church of Christ.

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE

1400 E. Main Street, Kent, OH 44240
Phone: (330) 673-9534
kentucc.org

No matter who you are , or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!



**"The most beautiful thing we can
experience is the mysterious. It is
the source of all true art and all
science. He to whom this emotion
is a stranger, who can no longer
pause to wonder and stand RAPT in
AWE, is as good as dead:
~his eyes are closed~**

Albert Einstein

WONDER