

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

1. WHO ARE WE TODAY – description of who you are as a church, and your vision and mission statement

Kent United Church of Christ is a community of faith located in Kent, Ohio. As a church, we are committed to living out the teachings of Jesus Christ through our actions and by welcoming all people to join us in worship and fellowship.



Our church's mission comes from Micah 6:8: 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.

Our **vision** is to be a beloved community where everyone is celebrated as God made them and where all of creation flourishes in the compassion, healing, justice and love of Christ.

We seek to create a space where people can gather to worship, learn, and grow together, regardless of their background or circumstances. We believe in the power of community to make a positive impact on our society, and we are committed to using our resources to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those around us.



We are an ONA, A2A, WISE congregation, and we are currently working to become a Creation Justice church. We believe that every person is created in the image of God, and therefore we are called to value and honor the dignity of all individuals. We seek to create a space where people of all backgrounds and identities can come together to worship, learn, and grow in their faith.

We are also committed to advocating for social justice, both locally and globally. We believe that the teachings of Jesus call us to work toward a more just and equitable world where all people are treated with dignity and respect. We seek to put these beliefs into action through our various outreach programs, which include supporting local food banks and shelters, working for immigrant and refugee rights, and advocating for environmental sustainability.

Kent United Church of Christ is committed to living out the teachings of Jesus through our actions. We seek to build a community that is inclusive, diverse, and dedicated to social justice. Through our

mission and vision, we strive to create a world where love, justice, and equality are experienced by all people.

2. WE LIVE OUT OUR VISION AND MISSION THROUGH THE FOLLOWING – worship, faith formation, care and fellowship, mission and outreach opportunities:

Kent UCC lives out its mission and vision through a variety of means, including worship, faith formation, care and fellowship, and mission and outreach opportunities.

The church's Worship and Arts Ministry works in conjunction with the ministerial staff and music personnel to coordinate worship services and to provide complementary support for worship themes and church seasons. The ministry has completed an AV upgrade, improvised worship opportunities due to COVID-19, and developed skits and other unique tools for explaining the Worship and Arts Ministry's activities. Additionally, the ministry decorates the Sanctuary and Chapel for special services with seasonal flowers and appropriate holiday decorations. The staff has adjusted and innovated in uncertain times to provide seamless, meaningful worship opportunities for the entire church community.



In the area of faith formation, the church provides numerous opportunities for members to deepen their faith through classes, retreats, and book studies, and other programs. Our youth participate in Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and annual mission trips. The congregational care ministries (Diaconate, Stephen Ministry) provide care and support to members who are sick, hospitalized, or in need of assistance. The Fellowship Ministry provides opportunities for members to gather and socialize, including potluck dinners, game nights, and other events.

The church's Outreach Ministry has impacted many lives both locally and globally through donations to organizations such as Kent Social Services, the Portage County NAACP, the King Kennedy Center, Kent Cares, the Haven of Portage County, Safer Futures, the Ben Curtis Foundation, and Habitat for Humanity, among others. The church's 5 for 5 offerings support various missions. We partner with United Christian Ministries of Kent State University, the only Christian LGBTQ+ affirming organization on campus. The church's most recent Christmas Eve offering was donated to Habitat and UCC's Pakistan Relief Fund. Additionally, the church participates in projects such as disaster relief and the distribution of Birdie Bags (summer lunches) and Christmas gifts to area families.

Overall, the church lives out its mission and vision through a wide range of activities, programs, and initiatives that aim to provide support and care to members, deepen their faith, and serve the wider community.

3. STATISTICAL DATA

Active Membership: 363

Total Reported Membership: 365 (including 2 associate members)

Sunday Worship average attendance: 92

Average Church School Attendance: 12

Members serving on Boards and Committees (DO NOT include small groups): 16 members on governing board; 121 serving on committees and ministries with some overlap in numbers as several people serve on multiple committees

Mission outreach giving, annual: \$62,167 (cannot give % due to some of the total being special offerings and collections)

Our church's annual plan for resourcing the ministry (budget):

Number of staff persons serving the church: 4 full time/part time

List staff positions: Senior Pastor, Music Director, Office Administrator, Custodian and several stipend staff (Bell Choir Director, Children's Worship and Arts Director, AV Staff, Nursery Assistant, Student Singers and Bell Ringers)

4. WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME TRENDS IN THE CHURCH FOR THE LAST 5 YEARS?

Inspired by our church's 200th Anniversary marked in June 2019, our congregation began exploring a re-visioning process with several small group gatherings in April 2018. Over the next year and a half a Strategic Planning Task Force met, prioritizing the ideas and issues that emerged from the Visioning Process into achievable goals. Visionary outcomes and anticipated cultural shifts were identified as critical to continue to "Be the Church." The resulting plan was embraced with congregational approval on January 19, 2020 and included a new mission statement vision statement along with the following five Mission Priorities:

Community Outreach and Care

Caring for our Congregation

Providing Extravagant Welcome

Faith formation and Spiritual Growth

Social Justice and Global Engagement



Not surprisingly, COVID shutdowns interfered not only with many of the established goals and tasks we identified to help reach our visionary outcomes, but also our capacity to initiate our church's long

term financial, programmatic, and staffing needs through a possible capital campaign. Nevertheless, we have remained committed to these five Mission Priorities over the past five years and discovered new ways of thinking and doing amidst emerging trends and cultural shifts resulting from the pandemic:

We recognize that attendance will no longer drive engagement. Rather, engagement will drive attendance. We find ourselves learning how to utilize varied and diverse sources of electronic and media engagements to do so and have made substantial financial investments in upgrades to our AV and electronic equipment and media sources.

We recognize financial engagement must include all forms of opportunities to give and we now have an ever-growing number of congregants utilizing our on-line electronic Engage system to donate electronically as well as via their cell phone.

Despite the pandemic, our Outreach Ministry has found new ways for us to engage in service and mission both within our community and in support of our wider church mission. Our financial support of the Outreach Ministry has grown over the last five years, a testament to the belief that people will continue to give generously of their time, talent, and financial resources if they believe in the mission.



In these last five years our Social Justice and Advocacy Committee has embraced the notion that “being right” must be less important than “doing right.” Caring and advocating for the voiceless, powerless, and disenfranchised is vital. Building relationships and partnerships in our community and around the world with those doing the work of economic, political, and social justice is important work. We happily dedicated the Portage County NAACP office in our church building, illustrating our commitment to partner with and alongside them in our common mission of healing, justice and unity. Our middle school and high school youth programs have also had a long history of strong commitment to mission and justice work.

Since 2018, we have supported a full time Faith Formation position. The person in that position earned the conference financial package when they became an ordained minister. As their circumstances changed, they transitioned from full-time to part-time, and then ultimately left us for work closer to family. Our Sunday School teachers, Christian Education Ministry members and lay youth advisors stepped up to meet the spiritual and educational needs of our children and youth for more than a year and a half. Our congregation’s ongoing commitment to offering meaningful,

dynamic, and spiritually grounded faith formation opportunities for our children, youth, families, and adults now compels us to call a full time Associate Minister of Faith Formation.

There is a growing effort to recognize the interconnectedness of our church ministries and to collaborate with local churches. For the past number of years, we have held joint Ash Wednesdays and Good Friday church services with both the Disciples of Christ and Trinity Lutheran Church of Kent and our summer VBS is now a regular collaboration with the Disciples of Christ. Rather than church ministries working in isolation of one another, we recognize their interconnectedness and see more value when ministries such as our Outreach Ministry, Social Justice Committee, and Green Team collaborate with one another on a particular venture.



5. WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME TRENDS in the larger community/town in which the church is located?

Located in Portage County, Kent has a population of 28,000 and is the 54th largest city in Ohio. It spans more than 9 square miles and has a population density of 3,052 people per square mile. Its population has decreased by - 0.73% since the 2020 census. It is home to Kent State University and lies between the cities of Cleveland and Akron. The average income is \$54,753 with a poverty rate of 22.3%. The downtown hosts many small businesses, restaurants, and bars. A convenient large Esplanade extension provides easy walking access between the downtown area and Kent State University. The university provides a host of educational and cultural opportunities for its Kent residents to enjoy!



Notable attention has been given to some of the following points that our church is supporting in a communal relationship with both the city of Kent and the greater Portage County community:

Expanded homeless shelters include The Haven of Portage County that opened in 2022 after years of fundraising and renovation to an existing building in Ravenna. The facility offers 64 beds to the homeless and has been much needed as there has been only one homeless shelter in Portage County for years, the Miller House. Our congregation continues to give support and aid to both of these facilities.

A year-round Farmers' Market and church and school programs address food insecurity over weekends and long school breaks. Our church regularly provides volunteers for these community-based services and hosts a monthly community meal led by our youth.



Kent City Council, the Kent Police Department and the Kent State Police force continue to have ongoing dialogue with the Portage NAACP in efforts to build a more diverse police and safety service in the community, recognizing the value that a diverse safety force has in promoting a safe and healthy community for all its citizens.”

Our church continues to foster a collaborative relationship with such existing community organizations as the Kent InterFaith Alliance (KIFA), the League of Women Voters of Kent, the Portage County NAACP, the Portage County Mental Health and Recovery Board, and Coleman Health Services in presenting a host of relevant community forums to educate and enlighten the greater community at large.”

6. THE SPECIFIC MINISTRIES/ISSUES YOU EXPECT YOUR NEXT PASTOR to address during their tenure -including the gifts, talents, and skills and leadership style you are looking for in your next pastor

Kent UCC is seeking an Associate Minister to enthusiastically lead and inspire our children and youth in their faith formation. We desire an individual who will nourish and support our young people to help them know they are fully loved and accepted by God. We are looking for a compassionate and energetic person who will guide children and youth in their love of Jesus, biblical literacy, spiritual development and commitment to justice and peace.



At the grade school level, the new Associate Minister of Faith Formation will help children develop a solid Christian foundation through Bible stories, lessons and activities. This individual will work closely with our Christian Education ministry team to choose curriculum for Sunday school, coordinate Vacation Bible School, and give a brief children's message Sunday mornings. Additionally, the successful candidate will supervise Sunday School teachers, nursery staff, and the Children's Director of Worship and the Arts.

At the middle school level, we are seeking someone to develop and oversee our Junior High youth (J Walkers). Through service activities and social outings, this individual will work with the advisors to help Middle Schoolers transition from the stories and lessons they've learned as children to exploration of more complex aspects of faith in Jesus. In addition, the new Associate Minister will lead 8th graders through an in-depth, year-long confirmation class. During this time, confirmands will investigate the Bible, spiritual practices, theology, church history, the UCC mission. Students will develop an understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.



At the High School level, we are searching for someone to coordinate and support our senior high youth (UYF- United Youth Force). The new pastor will assist our advisors in developing fun and engaging activities while also encouraging older youth to explore their faith more fully. We seek a person with a deep theological understanding to guide high schoolers as they navigate unique challenges and experiences facing teens. Social justice is especially important to our senior high youth who practice God's love and Jesus' commitment to service through Mission trips and outreach activities. We are

seeking someone who will foster a sense of community and inclusion to help these youth mature in faith and serve their neighbors.

The following characteristics/qualities/talents/skills are essential in guiding our children and youth as they navigate their faith journeys:

- *Empathy
- *Active Listener
- *Engaging Personality
- *Effective Communicator
- *Ability to establish rapport with multi age groups
- *Capacity to embrace and promote an inclusive environment
- *Organizational skills
- *Strong commitment to social justice
- *Sense of Humor
- *Able to facilitate a safe space
- *Fosters a fun environment

7. PROVIDE AN ESTIMATED COMPENSATION RANGE you are offering in dollar amounts. If less than full-time, specify the hours of work.

Do you follow Conference Compensation guidelines. Yes

_____ Pam Quellhorst _____
Council/Search Committee Chairpersons

4.18.2023
Date

8. COMMENTS FROM THE ASSOCIATION



Signature of Association Staff

4.18.2203

Date

Association Staff member assisting:
Rev. Nayiri Karjian, General Minister
960 Portage Trail, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio 44221
c. 203.722.9174
o. 330.940.2220 x102
nayiri.agm@livingwaterone.org

**ASSOCIATE MINISTER FOR FAITH FORMATION
POSITION DESCRIPTION
KENT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

Position Summary:

The Associate Minister for Faith Formation coordinates Christian formation, spiritual growth, and religious education programs that support a deepening of the Christian faith. In alignment with the vision and mission of the church, the Associate Minister for Faith Formation will provide leadership, enthusiasm, and vision for the faith development of our youth and children. This is a full-time position.

Essential Responsibilities:

- **Youth Education**

- **Confirmation**

- Leads an intensive year-long exploration with youth confirmands (typically 8th graders) of the Bible, spiritual practices, theology, church history, and UCC mission and identity that invites spiritual reflection and encourages Christian formation and commitment in preparation for the Rite of Confirmation.

- **Youth Ministry**

- **J-Walkers (middle school youth group)**

- Develops and oversees a program of service activities and social outings that encourages Christian formation and invites authentic relationships and spiritual reflection.
 - Coordinates and supports the leadership of youth group advisors.
 - Encourages participation in UCC association, conference, and national church events.
 - Encourages participation in summer church camps and retreats.

- **United Youth Force (high school youth group)**

- Develops and oversees a program of service activities, mission trips, social outings, and regular meetings that encourages Christian formation, forges authentic relationships, and invites theological reflection.
 - Coordinates and supports the leadership of UYF advisors and officers.
 - Encourages participation in UCC association, conference, and national church events.
 - Encourages participation in summer church camps and retreats.

- **Children's Education**

- **Sunday School**

- Oversees Children's Sunday School.
 - Coordinates Vacation Bible School and other special events and educational opportunities for younger children, in collaboration with the Christian Education Ministry.
 - Supervises the Children's Director of Worship and the Arts.
 - Serves as the staff liaison to the Christian Education Ministry.

- **Worship**

- Preaches once a month or as agreed upon with the Senior Minister.
 - Leads worship at the request of the Senior Minister or Worship and Arts Ministry.
 - Leads and coordinates Children's Moments/Sermons in worship.
 - Conducts funerals and weddings as needed or requested.
 - Fulfills other duties as assigned by the Senior Minister.

Qualifications:

- Ordained minister with a master's degree in theology, pastoral ministry, or religious education
- Three years professional experience in a pastoral or religious education setting preferred
- Demonstrated experience, commitment, and passion for working with youth and children
- Theological grounding, biblical knowledge, and an ability to articulate Christian beliefs and values
- Spiritual depth
- Knowledge of developmental levels of children and youth related to approaches that are appropriate for enhancing faith formation
- Knowledge and ability to develop curricula, learning experiences, and spiritual practices for Christian formation

Personal and Professional Commitments:

- Work collaboratively with the Senior Minister (and other staff), church officers, and in consultation with the Christian Education Ministry and other relevant lay ministries
- Demonstrate a strong commitment to express and grow in the Christian faith
- Attend meetings of the Christian Education Ministry (and other relevant lay ministries when needed)
- Oversee, recruit, and support the Nursery Care program
- Supervise Children's Director of Arts and Worship
- Monitor and keep accurate records of compliance with Safe Church policies
- Participate fully in the worship and life of the congregation and its mission

Attributes and Competencies:

- Open and engaging communication style with strong social skills and a high EQ; approachable, easily builds rapport and trust with youth; able to facilitate deep conversations with youth and children on faith, beliefs, and values
- Strong leadership, communication, and teambuilding abilities
- Excellent planning, organizational, and collaborative skills
- Demonstrates ease using multiple communication platforms and social media
- Shares leadership with youth and develops and facilitates leadership among youth
- Ability to purposefully integrate youth and children throughout the life of the church
- Possesses the personality traits of being a loving, authentic, non-judgmental, stable, and calming Christian role model
- Ability to facilitate and mobilize a team of adult leaders; foster synergy among leaders; and integrate other adults into youth and children's ministries by capitalizing on the adults' gifts
- Brings an ecumenical spirit, theological curiosity, and commitments to social justice, interfaith dialogue, community service and global mission in alignment with the church's mission and vision

Approved by the congregation on 12/11/22