



2026 Newsletter

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The Pastor's Report

The New Year began with my silent retreat at the Abbey of Gethsemane in New Haven, Kentucky. It is the home of Trappist Monks and an experience of the Holy that is unique. The silence was an invitation for me to listen. How am I as husband, father, pastor? Where is God? How is my vocational calling? Where is First UCC called to be these days? How am I to lead, to listen, to learn?

*Hello darkness, my old friend
I've come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping
Left its seeds while I was sleeping
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains within the sound of silence*

I emerged from the silence and entered a world of sounds. Renee Good had been shot four times by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent. Sounds of chaos, fear, anger, disgust, protest, and excuses filled our airwaves, city halls, streets, and yes churches.

We do not hide in silence from the truths of what church is called to be. We are to be places of healing, of sanctuary, of forgiveness, and of love. In our prophetic stance to “BE THE CHURCH” we need to sit with the sounds and images around us and listen for the way that unites us as siblings – brothers and sisters. The Sunday immediately following Good’s death, we had Heleana Theixos, PhD in Business Ethics, speak to us about power dynamics and ethics and the moral injury we can incur. When we are in positions of power, we will abuse that power, Theixos says, and do things that go against even our own moral and ethical values. Deep breaths... Look into the eyes of the other. See the face of God. Can the ICE agent do this with the protestor they encounter? Can the protester look into eyes of an agent and say the same? Can those who are immigrants be seen as they truly are? God’s beloved seeking life.

*And in the naked light I saw
10.000 people, maybe more
People talking without speaking
People hearing without listening
People writing songs
That voices never share
And no one dared
Disturb the sound of silence*

Two weeks later we were there again. Alex Jeffrey Pretti was killed with rapid fire from the ICE agents. Pretti's backstory is of a VA nurse who was known for his compassion, humor, and dedication to be a healer at work and in community. We cannot remain silent. Trappist monk Thomas Merton lived in community for 40+ years and practiced the art of silence. Yet his voice was loud and clear throughout his prophetic writing. Through his writings, he spoke out against war. He reminded humanity of our call to hospitality and welcome of the stranger. He challenged the church to go beyond the comfort of Catholicism and listen to the voices of Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, people of no religious faith. He wrote volumes of the inner life and how we are called to practice ways of justice, truth, contemplation, and action.

*Fools said I, "you do not know
Silence like a cancer grows
Hear my words that I might teach you
Take my arms that I might reach to you"
But my words like silent raindrops fell
And echoed in the wells of silence
And the people bowed and prayed
To the neon god they made
And the sign flashed out its warning
And the words that it was forming
And the sign said
"The words of the prophets
Are written on the subway walls
And tenement halls"
And whispered in the sound of silence*

Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel wrote "The Sounds of Silence" for their first album in 1964. It was following the events of November 1963 with the Kennedy assassination and be an anthem of the 60s as violence, protest, and change were all around. No matter the era, the song reflects the feelings of alienation and disturbance. It speaks to the pain and sadness of the times. Where do we find the words of the prophets, the songs of protest, the actions of justice and love these days? We take in much these days. Let it stir in us compassionate and urgent responses of peace. What better time than the month of February. A month that sees us begin our holy season of Lent. Prayers to pray; actions to take; and blessings in our silence to contemplate this month.

Dan

What's the Buzz? – Church Music, Media, and Faith Formation

January was a long, hard month. I had the personal struggle of losing my grandfather on the 9th. This is the fourth death in my family in four years, having lost my cousin to cancer in 2023 and three grandparents each year since. I want to thank everyone who reached out during all of these hard times. While there were good moments in January for the church's music, media, and faith formation realms, I'm looking ahead to what February has in store.

After a longer winter break than we expected (thank you, Mother Nature), I'm pleased to welcome back the chancel choir and handbell choir. The chancel choir starts the month off with a moving anthem, "Hold On," that serves as a reminder to us all that we are not alone in the struggles of life. On the 8th, the choir sings "Love Never Leaves," which reflects on those who have left this world but still live on in our hearts, minds, and all that we do. On the 15th, they will sing a very fitting anthem, one of my absolute favorites: "In the Bleak Midwinter." They close out the month with "O God, Most Holy," which incorporates the melody of the very famous, "Panis Angelicus."

The handbell choir rings on February 15th, performing an arrangement of "Londonderry Air" (also known as "O Danny Boy") which incorporates both the handbells and hand chimes. I will continue to say that it is never too late to join either group if you have an interest in joining in on the fun! The groups are low-stress, high-fun, and I do all that I can to ensure even the most novice musicians are able to perform at their best. Talk with me or a fellow choir member to find out more!

On a media note, I have a new phone number. Please email me at james.firstucc@outlook.com if you are interested in having my number. If I already have your number, still send me a note as a reminder to text you. Other media projects I will work on this month include receiving bids for a new sound system and the installation of two projectors. While I try to not let the congregation see the behind-the-scenes struggles, our sound system is close to 31 years old and is constantly giving me issues. Also, as we hosted many events in 2025, none of these outside folks used our sound system – they brought in their own boards, microphones, and accessories for the MLK service and Bishop Paula's ordination. The musicians at the Pride service decided to sing without microphones... As we continue to grow, using our facilities more for both church events as well as community gatherings, an updated system for audio and visual is of high priority to me. Talk with me if you have questions or want to learn more.

One final thing to note – I will be away from February 24 through March 8. I thank Tricia Lenhof and Jeanne Phillips for their musical talents while I am away. Also, thanks to Bernie Wehman for his continuous expertise on the iPad for livestreaming, as well as to Mason and Chris Baldwin for their assistance in unpacking and packing up the projector, iPad, and laptop. Thank you, all! - Jimmy

Upcoming Events

Reminder that Pizza with the Pastor is always the first Sunday of the month. Sisterhood of Seekers will meet on Sunday, February 15 following the service.

Please mark your calendars as we mark our foreheads on February 18 for the start of Lent. Ash Wednesday services will be held at noon here at First UCC; then, all are invited to join the 513 UCC Region for our combined potluck dinner and service beginning at 5:00 p.m. at St. John's Westminster on Neeb Road.

During the Lenten Season, following Sunday services on March 15, 22, and 29, Linda Neumaier and Pastor Dan are inviting folks to join in a quiet, meditative time following the services on those days. We will have a light snack followed by some intentional prayer, listening, and journaling. Session will last about an hour. More details and signup to be coming. Stay connected.

Legends and Landmarks

On February 28 at 5:30 p.m., First UCC will host another showing of the Legends and Landmarks movies for the community. Church neighbors Doug and Tony will again show the two episodes they have created for College Hill. These are the first two episodes that highlight the neighborhood. This is free and open to all – College Hill residents and beyond. A great history and story are shared. Light snacks and drinks are provided.

Memorials

Gift to the General Fund in Loving Memory of Don Fricke, from:
Linda Napolione

Gifts to the Memorial Fund in Memory of Don Fricke, from:
Ken & Diane Burger
Mary Taylor
Plumbers, Pipefitters & Mechanical Equipment Services, Local Union 392

Gifts to the Music Fund in Memory of Don Fricke, from:
Jean & David Krebs
Joanne & Dave Garrett

Finance Committee News

January 2026

Recap of Church Facility Projects presented at the Congregational Meeting:

Necessary Repairs:

1. Salt has ruined the bottom of the wall of bricks to the right of the entry door to the fellowship hall, between that door and the left doors to the narthex. A separate contract to repair the wall is necessary. We expect this project to be expensive.
2. The parking lot needs all existing cracks repaired and needs to be resurfaced.
3. The walkway on the north side of the church that goes around the kitchen to the hallway needs improved drainage. The wall that supports this sidewalk has brick and mortar damage.
4. Twelve pillars support the entrance overhang. They need new mortar and a few new replacement bricks that were destroyed by salt when we were removing snow and ice. We need a contractor to do the work, but the expense is reasonable.
5. The bell tower has several missing blocks/bricks and needs to be repaired.
6. Duke Energy required us to move electrical components from inside the church to the main electrical reception box that is near the parking lot. They also required us to build solid barriers between the box and the parking lot to prevent damage to the box and the components.
7. Undetermined work is needed to address exterior water issues. The facilities team is collecting necessary information.

Nice to have projects:

1. Installing automatic doors to the main entrance doors and first floor restrooms.
2. The sanctuary audio and video system needs updating.
3. Shorten designated pew(s) to accommodate wheelchairs in the sanctuary, out of the main aisle.
4. The outdoor playset needs replaced.

If you would like more information, have a project idea, or would like to be part of the capital campaign team, please call or text Jean Krebs at 513-703-4536. All are welcome.

Please Keep in Prayer

Amanda and family (daughter of Hilda Faulkner)
Beverly & Mike Rose (dear friends of Suwanna Kirkman)
Blake Webb (friend of Jackie Smith)
Bill Mayer (member)
Brian Kirkman (son of Ron Kirkman)
Carolyn Bruckmann (friend of the church)
Charlene Jones (sister of Jackie Smith)
Charlie (friend of Herb Brookbank)
Chelsea and Sophia (friends of Pam, Hilda Faulkner's friend)
Christi Simmons (friend of Michelle Richards)
Christine White (friend of Jackie Smith)
Cindy Moeller (friend of Bruce & Kathie Steinhard)
Cindy & Mark Wolf (friends of the Colding's)
Daisy (friend of Hannah Steinhard)
Darryl P. and Mickey P. (cousins of Bev Bosse)
David Krebs (member)
Diane Ripley (friend of the Kirkman's)
Dorothy (aunt of Suwanna Kirkman)
Elaine Lewis (Jackie Smith's granddaughter)
Elsie & Bob Biddle (aunt and uncle of the Krebs Family)
Family and friends of Jackie Smith
Family of Anna Jean Shock (aunt of Ron Kirkman)
Family of Don Fricke (member)
Family of Gary Smith (husband of Sandy; stepfather of Patty Baldwin)
Family of George Frazer (neighbor and friend of the Kirkman Family)
Family of Jack Parsons (father of Patty Baldwin)
Family of Terrence Stern-Enzi, "Tt" (co-worker of Gina Kern)
Family of William Kirkman (uncle of Ron Kirkman)
Friends from Clovernook (of Carol Ann White)
Haley (friend of the Copenhaver's)
Jessica (friend of Carol Ann White)
Joan Schmidt (daughter of the late Ollie Helm)
Jody Eversole (friend of Suwanna Kirkman)
Joe (uncle of Suwanna Kirkman)

Joey Miller (grandson of Ron Kirkman)
Katie and family (daughter of Bernice and Terry Morgan, friends of the church)
Kelly Ann Pennington (sister-in-law of Suwanna Kirkman)
Kesha and Family (friends of Ron Kirkman)
Kimberly Morgan (cousin of Ron Kirkman)
Laura Hauck (member)
Lea Pirro (daughter of Lucille Isaacs)
Lucille Isaacs (member)
Lynne (friend of the church)
Marvin Stamper (employee at C.M. Meyer & Assoc.)
MaryJo O'Brien (friend of Michelle Richards)
Michelle M. (cousin of Bev Bosse)
Michelle Richards (dear friend of the Senior Social)
Pam and family (friends of Hilda Faulkner)
Pat Froehle (member)
Ramon (grandson of Hilda Faulkner)
Ron Kirkman (member)
Ron Cummins (dear friend of Amanda Faulkner)
Sandy Echols (member)
Sharon Kazee (prayer asked from Sandy Echols)
Su H. (friend of Bev Bosse)
Thomas (nephew of Hilda's friend, Pam)
Tiffany Nelson (friend of Ron Kirkman)
Tina Maxwell (Sue Bilz' best friend)
Vicki Thorner (Sue Bilz' cousin)
Whiting Family (cousins of the Krebs Family)

Birthdays and Anniversaries

Birthdays

02/03 – Barb Carl
02/07 – Maddie Weyand-Geise
02/09 – Mandi Cornish
02/12 – Braden Buttlerwerth
02/14 – Amy Weyand-Geise
02/17 – Shelly Steiner
02/22 – Gina Kern
02/25 – Jason Rodenbeck
02/27 – David Krebs
02/28 – Laura Copenhaver

Anniversaries

02/25 – Dan & Amy Weyand-Geise

First UCC Church Board Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2025 (In-Person & Zoom)

In attendance: Milt Hauck, Tom Shelton, Darrell Copenhaver, Bruce Steinhard, Jean Krebs, Gail Bauknecht, Ed Bosse, Bev Smith

Treasurer: Christy Meyer

Pastor: Dan Weyand-Geise

Excused: Bill Henrich

- I. **Call to Order** -- Milt called the meeting to order.
- II. **Devotion** -- Pastor Dan asked us to tell the “One Good” from the past year.
- III. **Treasurer’s Report (Christy):** The November reports were accepted, and approval was given to pay December expenses. Christy said that she and Jean’s figures balanced. Jean asked Ed about Insurance Board costs as Finance Committee had projected a 10% increase. Ed reported he had talked to the Insurance Board rep and has a verbal amount increase of about 4%. There were also questions about the price from our snow removal company for this year. Also is questioning 7 weeks of mowing in October and November. Cleaning will be having a 3% increase.

Motion: Tom Second: Bev Accepted: All in favor

Bills – Christy went over the Bills for December and Lisa will have a figure from the AED company at next month’s meeting.

Motion: Bruce Second: Jean Accepted: All in favor

On a personal note, Christy reported that the trip to New York with her church choir to sing with other choirs at Carnegie Hall went well. There were a total of 216 people singing in the choir from 17 different groups.

- IV. **Recording Secretary’s Report (Bruce)** – The November report was accepted with some corrections. Jean asked if the Facilities Committee will look at the information Deb researched from Duke Energy.

Motion: Milt Second: Bill Accepted: All in favor

V. **Financial Secretary's Report (Jean) –**

Motion: Darrell Second: Jean Accepted: All in favor

VI. **Pastor's Report –** Pastor Dan submitted his report to the Church Board, which included the following updates and reflections:

- **Found House / IHN Hosting** – Our last hosting began on Sunday and will end on December 15th. This week's families have different schedules as adults work later shifts than normal, and the volunteers have to adjust.
- **Fishes & Loaves** – nothing to report
- **Phil's** – nothing to report
- **Christmas Party** – on December 21st

Motion: Second: Accepted: All in favor

VII. **Committee Reports**

Gail reported – The Christmas Tree is up with the help of several volunteers and a new tree will be purchased shortly for next year as the current one has seen better days. Gail was grateful for the help.

Pastor Dan reported – Sammi, Brad and June Bronnert are willing to come on to the Church Board.

Facilities

- Darrell shared the light in the parking lot will be fixed this week. Gail mentioned there are several lights out in the Narthex and Sanctuary. These will need to be replaced by a company who has the equipment to get up to the ceilings.
- The hood over the stove was cleaned and a Certificate was given to Paul. The hood need to be professionally cleaned once a year and Certificate given to us.
- We were reminded that the **CHURCH is a TAX EXEMPT** entity and any purchases for things for the church should not be taxed. **If any member does not have this number, please contact the Church Office or Pastor Dan so you have it.**

- Gutters were cleaned recently
- Ed brought up there are several small water issues which need to be addressed. He was reminded that we need to have 2 – 3 estimates (per the Constitution) and those presented to the Board,
- Ed and Dan to have a meeting with Rodney to discuss snow removal.
- Gail mentioned some uneven pavement in the sidewalk going into the kitchen by the side walkway.
- The sealing of the parking lot was again mentioned and Ed had a bid of \$1,800.00.

- **Music (Jean)** – nothing to report
- **Budget (Jean)** – nothing to report other than what was brought up earlier in the meeting.
- **Endowment (Bill)** – Ed reported.

VIII. **Old Business**

- **By-Laws (Bruce and Pastor Dan)** – The Constitution & By-Laws are available by contacting the office, Bruce Steinhard, or Pastor Dan
- **Nominating** – see earlier note under Committee reports

IX. **New Business** – Jean mentioned the Capital Fund Campaign and the need for information from committees about special projects that need funding, so she can put it into her report for the Congregational Meeting. One item mentioned is work on the equipment for the sound system and AV projection and a way for viewers to participate more. Committees were again reminded that TWO BIDS need to be presented before any work is done.

X. **Adjournment**

Moved: Tom Seconded: Jean Accepted: All in Favor

XI. **Lord's Prayer**

*Submitted by: J. Bruce Steinhard
Recording Secretary*

Open & Affirming (ONA) Covenant of First United Church of Christ

We, the members of First United Church of Christ, welcome you...

- ♥ If you are Asian, Black, Brown, Hispanic, Native American, or White;
- ♥ If you are male, female, transgender, or gender non-conforming;
- ♥ If you are 3 years old, 33 years old, or 103 years old;
- ♥ If you are from just down the street, from across the country, or from another part of the globe;
- ♥ If you grew up at Hoffner Church, were confirmed in the Catholic Church, got married in a non-denominational church, worshipped in a synagogue or mosque, or have never attended a religious service;
- ♥ If you are single, married, widowed, divorced, separated, or partnered;
- ♥ If you are straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or unsure of your sexuality;
- ♥ If you are a Democrat, Independent or Republican, affiliated with another political party or no party at all;
- ♥ If you have, or have had, addictions, phobias, or a criminal record;
- ♥ If you own your home, rent, live with your parents, or are homeless;
- ♥ If you were baptized at First UCC, or are worshipping here for the first time;
- ♥ If you attend services every week, once a month, or once a year;
- ♥ If you have typical or atypical skills, no matter your abilities or disabilities;

However the rest of the world describes you, and however you describe yourself: You are a beloved child of God and are welcome at First UCC. Being fully welcome in our community here at First United Church of Christ means that as we keep the love of Christ at the center of all we do, our congregation will:

- ♥ Always seek to affirm the person that you are with loving hearts and open minds.
- ♥ Follow the way of Christ Jesus with you in loving and being loved by both God and neighbor, with the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.
- ♥ Support and encourage you in your ongoing spiritual and religious journey.
- ♥ Love you for the person you are by living out our denomination's promise that

“No matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome at First United Church of Christ.”

First United Church of Christ

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Milt Hauck, *President*

Tom Shelton, *Vice President*

Bruce Steinhard, *Recording Secretary*

Jean Krebs, *Financial Secretary*

Christy Meyer, *Church Treasurer*

Sammi Asplan

Gail Bauknecht

Ed Bosse

June Bronnert

Bill Henrich

Brad Kramer

Beverly Smith



“God is still speaking.”