



Becky Cline

I grew up on a Pennsylvania dairy farm, where I developed a love of nature and was active in 4-H. I spent decades as a university professor. These experiences have played a large role in my identity. My teaching focused on interpersonal communication, small group decision-making, and health communication. I conducted research on interpersonal communication in the contexts of cancer, HIV/AIDS, pediatric cancer treatment, and slowly-evolving environmental disasters. Personally, I confess I am a chocoholic! (I also love taking photographs.) Today, my relationship with you and this community is important to my identity. You have been a godsend. Having wandered away from a very conservative church upbringing, I spent much of my life describing myself as "spiritual but not religious."

The title of the service at my first Sunday at UUCK, in August, 2014, was exactly that! I arrived here, the fourth church in four Sundays, having become attuned to Mystery with a capital M over my four-year journey post-treatment for stage-III colon cancer. I was on a search. I said I was looking for a place where I could "stand" to sit through

the service and a community serious about social justice. The last thing I expected that morning was to fall in love ... with the music, the minister, and the service. Mystery abounded. And now, I love the community.

I became a member in December, 2015. I could say, "in my heart," I have been a "lifelong UU" -- I just didn't really know that UU existed for most of that time! I am grateful for having found you and for your inviting me to grow through you and with you in a place that now feels like home. I especially value the opportunity to serve as a Worship Associate, to share my thoughts, and hopefully a few moments of spiritual creativity, with you. (If that weren't enough, among other things, I totally enjoy being part of the pancake team and am grateful for the Sacred Song Circle; that has gotten me through more than a few difficult times.) I feel humbled and honored to be on this slate; even more so, I feel the weight of responsibility. I hope to live up to your trust.

Don Easterling

I was born in a coal mine camp in West Virginia. Shortly afterwards, the mine was shuttered and my parents, along with all my uncles and aunts, moved to Ohio for work in the factories. Although we left the geography, the culture came with us. So, I was raised in an Appalachian environment that included a rich music tradition and a severe Pentecostal religion. I discarded the religion burden at the age of 16 and never looked back.

In 2005 I began searching for a church that might be a fit for me. The UU church in Kent was a happy discovery, and I have made it my community. The music and the people are what attracted me and they are what keep me here. I met my wife, Trish, here and we were married here. In a way, my delightful wife and the many joys we share are a gift from the church. I have invested in the church as a financial assistant and a greeter/usher, and I play French Horn in the folk orchestra and a brass quartet. I also sing and play guitar in a Celtic band that donates all received funds to the church and periodically does fund raisers for the church.

I recently retired from a full and rewarding career that included serving as an environmental scientist with EPA for a decade, and working at NASA for 28 years as an environmental engineer, project manager, supervisor, and finally a Division Chief. I am transitioning to a post-employment lifestyle, and expect the UU church of Kent will become an even more important part of my life in the coming years.





Saul Flanner

I have been a member of the UU Church of Kent since 2002, and UU-curious for several years prior. In 2003, my spouse and I began teaching OWL, the comprehensive sexuality class designed by the UUA, and have been doing it ever since. We are proud parents of a very active 6-year-old who has already benefitted greatly from the RE programs available at UUCK. I had the pleasure of serving on our last ministerial search committee, and found it to be a very rewarding and gratifying experience. I found many of my technical skills and experiences well-suited to the task last time around, and look forward to the opportunity to serve again.

Bonnie Harper

I grew up on the West Coast, California and Oregon, and I arrived in Kent by way of Tucson, Arizona and Memphis, Tennessee. I have a BA in Foods and Nutrition from San Diego State and a Masters in Early Childhood Education from Kent State. I retired from my first career, university administrative assistant in 1984 and from my second career, elementary teacher in 2009. I am enjoying retirement with my husband, Joe, and two cats and one recently acquired rescued dog. Between us, Joe and I have five children and only my son lives in the area. We enjoy long road trips to see the “kids” and grandchildren, with many sightseeing excursions along the way.

I was first introduced to the UU Church of Kent when one of my daughter’s friends asked her to play a trumpet duet in the Christmas Eve service. I immediately felt right at home and joined in 1995. Since that time, I have been involved in a variety of church activities including teaching RE and on the RE Committee, serving on the Board of Trustees, the Membership Committee, the Care Team, the Leadership Development Committee, Worship Associate Team, and my favorite job, where you see me the most, as a Sunday morning greeter. I’ve also participated in several Adult Religious Education classes and attended Summer Institute.



Debra-Lynn Hook

I grew up a cultural Catholic in the foothills of the South Carolina Blue Ridge and then in New Orleans. As a young adult studying journalism at LSU, I pulled away from the mysterious (which I loved) but dogmatic (which I didn't) religion of my youth, bounding back to "Catholic light" (the Episcopal church) when I got married. As I worked as a reporter for various newspapers, as my professor husband and I moved about the country with his work and our three children, I began to find myself drawn to various UUs with its simple but challenging message of love and social justice, even as I moved into leadership in mainstream churches.

A few years ago then, several years after I left the Episcopal church in Hudson during the shocking infighting over the election of a homosexual bishop, my good friend Hal asked me if I wanted to join the choir. I begin to know many in this loving community more intimately, and to resonate with the simple, but beautifully inspired mission — to inspire love, to seek justice and to grow in community. Finally, last spring, after several consultations with Rev. Melissa, I signed "the book" and joined the worship team, the care team and the social justice committee.

I am honored and thrilled at the prospect of further serving our community as we go in search of a new minister. I hope my professional skills as a photographer and print journalist will be of service, and that I can also call on skills honed at other churches. As important as anything, I hope to hold integrity, authenticity, deep discernment and a strong heart center of spiritual connection at the forefront of my work. I know we have big shoes to fill and that our congregation wants, needs and deserves a successor to do just that. I am grateful for your trust and look forward to contributing to our growing, vibrant fellowship.



Kathy Kerns

Kathy has attended our church for about 20 years and has been involved in many different areas of church life. She has served two terms on the Board (including as Treasurer and Moderator), been involved in pastoral care, expansion planning, and Religious Education, and most recently served as co-Chair of the Capital Campaign Team, a Worship Associate, and a member of the Internship Committee.

Kathy was raised in a UU Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and her own children Noah and Alan were raised in the Kent church. Kathy is a Professor at Kent State University, and in their free time she and her husband Kevin like to travel and go hiking.



Kathie Slater

I have been a member of the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Kent for forty-five years. During this time, it has been my privilege to serve in many capacities: RE teacher, chair of the RE committee, fundraiser, moderator of the board of trustees, and chair of Rev. Melissa Carvill-Ziemer's ministerial search committee. It is this last commitment of which I am most proud, and am honored to have this opportunity to serve the Kent Unitarian-Universalist Church in this capacity again.

I grew up in communities scattered from West Texas to Grand Rapids, Michigan to Fort Dodge, Iowa. I attended Grinnell College in Iowa majoring in political science before coming to Ohio and Antioch College to study education, receiving a Master of Arts in Teaching. My professional life centered around teaching middle school students in rural and suburban districts. I also spent many years working with a local education union serving as a building representative, a board member, a strike chair, a grievance chair, and a member of the negotiating team for several contracts.

My husband Joel and I raised our two children as Unitarian-Universalists in Kent. We are thrilled that both Matt and Sarah have remained UU's. Now our five grandchildren are enrolled in the religious education program at UUCK.

Serving as a member of the ministerial search committee for a settled minister is an opportunity to engage UUCK members and friends in dialogue concerning who we are, and where we as a congregation want to go. How are we currently living our mission and how can we be better at meeting our current commitments? What commitments do we want to make for the future? What an exciting journey we are on!

Rod Thompson

Rod Thompson is a former part-time minister and a longtime member of our church, and a former OMD District Consultant. Rod is a retired UU Accredited Interim Minister who has served congregations in Ohio, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, Minnesota, Pittsburgh, and New Mexico. Rod has also had careers as a teacher, mental health counselor, and radio salesman and manager. Rod and Mary have 4 children and 6 grandchildren.





Gene Wenninger

I have been a member of this congregation since 1964, coming to Kent as a new assistant professor in Sociology at Kent State. I was very active in the early years, serving as Moderator, chair Finance Committee (which position I also hold today), chair Centennial Committee (no, I am not 100 years old!), etc. I have seen the fortunes of the Church vary considerably over my years. And have experienced a wide variety of part-time, interim, and settled ministers. Today the Church is healthier than it's ever been and I want to help maintain that and see the Church grow even more.

At KSU I was primarily in administration, serving as chair of Department of Sociology twice, director of an urban and environmental center, dean, Research and Sponsored Programs, and vice provost, Research and Graduate Studies.

While working I was active in local affairs, serving 24 years as a Trustee for Robinson Memorial Hospital, serving on the Kent Planning Commission, Kent Bicentennial Commission, facilitating the City's Sustainability (Bicentennial) Plan, and reviewing funding requests for the Portage Foundation. Also founding member of the Kent Environmental Council and past chairperson. And member and past president of Kent Rotary.

I look forward to participating in this very important task.