

Currents

Newsletter of Harmony Creek Church



November, 2023

Give Thanks Dinner

Sunday, Nov 5th

following worship/salon

Council will Provide Thanksgiving meal with all the fixings and PIE to thank you for your generosity with your time and talent and treasure over the past year! Come join for thanksgiving and fellowship!



Game Night

Friday, November 24

6:30pm

Fellowship Hall

We will offer a New Member Class on Sunday November 12

All who are interested in becoming a member at Harmony Creek Church are invited to attend a New Member Orientation Class on Sunday November 12 2pm on zoom.

On Sunday December 10, we will take in new members during worship. This will also be the same day as our Annual Meeting so it is a perfect day to welcome new friends into our community. If you would like to be part of the class, please let Pastor Michelle know (pastormichelle@harmony-creek.org)



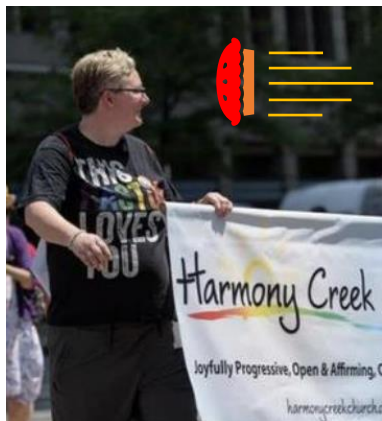
Pie in the Pastors' Faces

A 2023 HCC Stewardship Fundraiser



Have you ever wanted to pie someone just for the sake of it? Well now you can! Harmony Creek Church has rolled out its Stewardship Fundraiser: Pie in a Pastor's Face!

Pastors Michelle and Raven are taking one for the team! Our Stewardship Team has set a goal of a minimum of \$161,000 in pledges for the 2024 Church Budget. If this goal is met, our pastors will take a pie in the face and help us celebrate.



Tickets are being sold at \$2.00 each for the chance of having your name drawn at our Pie in the Pastor's Face Event which will be held on Sunday, December 10, 2023, immediately following our Annual Meeting. For any church members who pledge, you automatically get a free ticket; however, you are welcomed to buy additional ones for \$2.00 each and increase your chances.

The top 3 winning pie throwers must be present to win this once in a lifetime opportunity to put that pie in the faces of Pastors Michelle and Raven. You don't want to miss it!

Tickets can be purchased in person on Sunday mornings. Tickets will also be available for purchase and pick-up on the day of the Pie in the Face contest.

Submit your annual pledges and buy your tickets to help us meet our 2024

Church Budget goal!

Pastor Michelle will offer up a Three-Week Advent Movie Series – come watch the movie and discuss the spiritual aspects of the movie:

Wednesday, November 29 at 6:30, "Polar Express," in fellowship hall

Wednesday, December 6 at 6:30, "Spirited" in fellowship hall.

Sunday, December 17, the new "Wonka" movie at the Greene after worship/salon. We will go out to dinner and discuss the movie afterwards. Contact pastormichelle@gmail.com for final details.



Invitation to Honor all our Military Veterans on Sunday November 12

Pastor Michelle will take time on **Sunday November 12 to say a special blessing and express gratitude for all those in our church family who have served or are currently serving in our military.** We will include an insert in the bulletin where we list everyone's name. If you would like to be recognized, **please send your name and your branch of service to Pastor Michelle (pastormichelle@harmony-creek.org)**

Join us at **The Hindu Temple** visit

Saturday November 18 at 10am

2615 Temple Ln, Beavercreek, OH 45431



**Annual HCC Christmas Dinner
Saturday December 9th
5:30pm - 8pm**

fellowship hall

Join us for a **catered meal including dessert and live concert music from our very own Kat Ullery and Leah McCain**. We will celebrate the season with fun music and food! Tickets are \$25 per person or \$60 per family (if you have financial hardship and need assistance just reach out to the church office (office@harmony-creek.org) or Carrie Booker (carriebhcc@gmail.com) and we will get you a ticket! **ALL ARE WELCOME!!! There will also be a Christmas raffle basket up for grabs so bring those dollar bills for a chance to win a great basket!**

Do you love fellowship at Harmony Creek Church? We could use your help to make it happen! Will you:

Help with the Christmas dinner, we will need people to help set up, serve, tear down and clean up!

If you have an item/items to add to the Christmas raffle basket!

We are still looking for a Service Auction chair this job is not as daunting as it may sound! Carrie can give you all the details! The service auction is a staple at HCC! A fun time for all ages and a great way for us to raise funds!

If any of the above opportunities interest you please contact Carrie Booker at 937-604-6678 or at Carriebhcc@gmail.com

From Pastor Michelle

History was made on Friday October 20, 2023, as Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson was officially installed as the UCC's 10th General Minister and President. She is our first female president and first woman of African descent and first person who is an immigrant. What an honor it was to be physically present for this amazing Installation Service that was held at Lakewood Congregational Church near Cleveland, OH.

I thought I would share a little bit about our new General Minister and President. This comes from the bulletin that was given out at her service: "Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson answered her call to ordained ministry at Orange Grove Missionary Baptist Church in Durham, NC on August 15, 1999. As a theological scholar at Union Theological Seminary and later at Washington State University she explored multiple faith belongings and the intersecting spaces of God's presence in and among humanity in and outside of the church. In her former roles in the National setting as Associate General Minister, Minister for Racial Justice and Minister for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations she faithfully served across and with multiple faiths and denominations to bring the unfolding of God's beloved community among us. Today we are charged with installing her as the 10th General Minister and President of the UCC. She is the very first woman to serve in this role, breaking decades long tradition, shattering glass ceilings, forging paths for many other women and girls to follow, all while standing in the strength of the women who have gone before her."



General Secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union, Rev. Dr. Merlyn Hyde-Riley, was the preacher for the service and she delivered a powerful sermon that was centered around Isaiah 43.16-21 where God exclaims that God is doing a new thing. Certainly, God is doing a new thing and what a new thing it is!!! I truly felt the energy in that service, and I felt the Spirit moving. When it came time for the prayer of Installation all clergy were invited to come forward to do a laying on of hands. I went forward and joined with the 50 plus clergy and we gathered around Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson. This was, hands down (no pun intended), the most powerful moment of the whole service for me.

As I was surrounded by other clergy, I could feel God's Spirit moving through us as we enveloped Rev. Thompson in our prayers and in our love and support. I was also filled with intense gratitude for this moment. I couldn't help but think about how far I have come. I grew up in a church where women were commanded to be silent. Yet here I was, standing among clergy, offering up prayers for the UCC's first female President! As we take time to give thanks this month, I pause to give thanks for the UCC.

I am not sure where I would be if it weren't for the UCC. The UCC is where I found the God of love and not the God of judgment and wrath. I spent so many years thinking I was broken, and I had to be fixed for God to love me. I spent so many years denying who I truly was and all because I was chasing after God's love. I hold such deep gratitude for Nexus UCC because it was at that church that I finally came to see that I had always been loved and nothing would ever change that. It was at Nexus that I found my call and found my God and found my people.

I am so grateful to be serving as your Pastor and I am so thankful I said yes to the call! It's hard to believe it's been a year since I preached my first sermon and then was voted to be your next pastor. What a glorious day that was!!! I look forward to continuing this adventure as your pastor for many years to come!! Please know that I am grateful for each one of you!

Sending love and deep gratitude, **Pastor Michelle**

Coffee Hours with Pastor Michelle

Tuesday November 7, 2-4 pm
Tuesday November 14, 2-4 pm

at Coffee HUB
(450 N. Main St. Centerville, OH 45459)

Drop in for any length of time for a caffeinated chat!



Sunday In Person & Zoom Worship at 10:30 am

The link to our Zoom session is in the TWAHC that you receive on Friday. You can begin to sign on by clicking that link at 10:15 AM ... giving time for greeting others as they arrive for worship. There is also a phone number if you prefer to join us by phone.

Special Invitation to Create an All Saints' Wall

On Sunday November 5, we will have our All Saints' Day service. We will take time to remember all our loved ones who have died. Leading up to this service, **we invite you to bring pictures of your loved ones.** We will hang these pictures on our divider screen with push pins on the very outside border of the photos to avoid causing any issues to the picture. They will remain up through All Saints' Day.

Pastor Michelle will do her first Sermon Series!

Throughout the four Sundays of Advent, Pastor Michelle will preach her very first sermon series. She will be preaching **on the important women in Jesus' life:**

December 3 - Mary Magdalene

December 10 - Mary and Martha

December 17 - Joanna and Susanna

December 24 (Christmas Eve) Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Salon Schedule – Sunday at 10:30 am, Lounge

November 5: Marijuana: Yes or No?

Facilitator: Kathy Swensen

Issue 2 Legalizing Marijuana. What are the pros and cons? Let's talk it through.

November 12: Having An Attitude of Gratitude

Facilitator: Pastor Michelle

Join us in Salon as Pastor Michelle leads a conversation around the topic of gratitude. Brene Brown says: "I don't have to chase extraordinary moments to find happiness – it's right in front of me if I'm paying attention and practicing gratitude." **We will take time to talk about having an attitude of gratitude even when life is hard.**

November 19: The Power of Gratitude

Facilitator: Juli Burnell

Every day, we are faced with a choice on how to live out each moment. Choosing gratefulness has the capacity to alter the trajectory of our lives. We will start with a TED talk that invites us to look into our attitudes on gratitude. Is it a focus in your life?

November 26: Gratitude

Facilitator: Anna White

What are you grateful for? Let's dive deep into gratitude.

Here we go A-Caroling!!

On **Sunday December 3 after worship/salon**, all are invited to go Christmas Caroling to some of our homebound members. We invite our carolers to bring their own lunch and we will head out after we eat together. Please see Pastor Michelle if you want to participate.



Harmony Creek Families

Harmony Creek Children – Melanie Woodruff, Director of Children's Ministry

If you haven't already marked your calendars for December 2nd, please do!

We will be hosting our first ever Children's Christmas Bazaar! What's this? It's an open house for two hours from 1:30-3:30 for children and teens up to age 18 to come in and "shop" for gifts for their families! This will be a completely free shopping event for them.

Please continue to send in your donations for the children and youth

to have a variety of items to choose from. We are in need of children's items. (toys, books, miscellaneous things in case the kids want to shop for their siblings).

I'm so excited for this. Please invite any family you know to come to this event. Santa will be there to take pictures with and to talk to each child individually!

I will need volunteers for this event too.

Gift wrap is needed and tissue paper and gift bags. Tape for wrapping too!

I will need Santa's helpers (elves), wrappers, greeters, anyone willing to bake cookies or donate store bought cookies, milk, and water.

I will need help setting up and cleaning up.

I can also use any Christmas decorations that you think we could use to decorate the fellowship hall with! A Letters to Santa mailbox? I'm open to suggestions for the decor. Any help is truly welcome!

Children's Bazaar Shopping Event

Saturday December 2nd

1:30 pm- 3:30 pm

Fellowship hall

Pictures with Santa !!



This is a Free Shopping event for children to pick out gifts for their family members and caregivers.

Harmony Creek Youth

November 5 YOUTH will gather I the youth group room to once more engage in Spiritual Practices. Come and let us create sacred space together, as we listen to the Still Speaking God speaking to us. All youth welcome! Pizza, lemonade, and cookies will be provided. No additional snacks or drinks are required, unless you want to bring them. ***Please let me know if you are going to make it, so I know how much food to get.***

On November 19th from 5:30 to 7:00 pm, we will be meeting in the church's YOUTH GROUP ROOM for a night of socialization and games. Pizza, lemonade, and cookies will be provided. Come out and have fun with us!! ***Again... Please let me know if you are going to make it, so I know how much food to get.***

November 19th from 11:45 am to 1:00 pm or so, we will be having an Information / Planning Meeting for our 7th through 9th and our 10th through 12th OWL (Our Whole Lives) Program. This parent's meeting is mandatory for all parents who will have youth participate in the OWL program. The youth will have an opportunity (non-mandatory) to gather separately from the parents, with Pastor Michelle, so that the youth can learn more about the OWL program. If parents cannot attend this session, please let me know ASAP so that we can figure out a different day to get you the orientation that you need.

Sunday November 5th from 5:30 to 7:00 pm – Spiritual Practices

Sunday November 19th from 5:30 to 7:00 pm – Socialization and Shenanigans

Justice and Outreach Ministries

HCC's Justice League Visioning & Planning Session Saturday, November 4th from 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. at the Wilmington-Stroop Branch of the Dayton Metro Library

Join your Social & Environmental Justice Superhero friends as we brainstorm ideas for churchwide justice programming in 2024. We've reserved the beautiful Community Room at the Wilmington-Stroop Branch of the Dayton Metro Library. We'll have lots of room to spread out as we dream big!

We'll be centering our efforts on these five justice "strands" which will be interwoven into our church life throughout the upcoming year:

- **Economic Justice** – support the food pantry and work for a fairer economy
- **Environmental Justice** – build on current efforts to become better stewards of all creation
- **LGBTQ+ Justice** – continue to learn and advocate for and with our "rainbow siblings"
- **Racial Justice** – be engaged, active partners in the struggle for equity
- **Partners in Justice** – focus on the missions of the UCC throughout the world as well as participate in other justice-related events and observances

You'll have the opportunity to focus on the area(s) that most interest you.



The Wilmington-Stroop Library's address is 3980 Wilmington Pike. It's located at the corner of Stroop Road and Wilmington Pike across from the Meijer store and there is plenty of parking.

WE INVITE YOU TO WEAR YOUR FAVORITE THINKING CAP AND BRING YOUR IDEAS! ALL ARE WELCOME! Please email justice@harmony-creek.org to let us know you plan to attend.

You'll love being part of Harmony Creek's Justice League. With Caring, Collaboration, Courage & Commitment as our Superpowers, we will be a force for good!



Refugee Ministry



Matisho Victor, US Citizen



September 21st was a special day of celebration as three of Matisho's sisters and members of the Refugee Ministry Team proudly witnessed Matisho and 48 other new Americans take the oath of citizenship at the Federal Building in Dayton. We are so proud of Matisho! In addition to working hard to complete high school and attend college while working full time, Matisho is a wonderful role model for her siblings and helper to her entire family. It truly is people like Matisho who make the United States such an amazing country.



From the Moderator

Laura Boyd, Moderator

Did you ever wonder how decisions are made and what HCC does? Here is a basic tutorial of the Harmony Creek UCC Council.

HCC Council consists of the Moderator, Moderator-Elect, Secretary, Treasurer, and seven Ministries. Buildings and Grounds is the eighth Ministry but is not needed as HCC is currently renting our space from Good Shepherd Lutheran. The other seven Ministries are: Church Life, (Carrie Booker), Education, (Lisa Gagle), Finance and Stewardship, (John Allen), Human Resources, (Denise Bowell), Member Care, (Sue Oblinger), Worship Arts, (Elva Blatt), Social & Environmental Justice, (Kathy Swensen & Laurel Kerr). Moderator is Laura Boyd, Moderator-Elect is Elva Blatt, Secretary is Jeri Neihard, and Treasurer is Phil Jenkins. Please note that the Ministry, Justice & Outreach, is now Social & Environmental Justice. Kathy, Laurel, and Council believe the new name better fits the work of that Ministry. The HCC pastor attends council and is involved in discussions but is not a voting member.

Any new head of a ministry, Moderator, and Moderator-Elect are voted on during a December Congregational meeting as well as the 2024 budget and any other items that need a Congregational vote. HCC Covenant members may vote and are encouraged to attend. The congregation will be given official notice a month before any Congregational Meeting. This year's meeting is Sunday, December 10 immediately following church service and Salon. Congregational meetings can be called anytime there are issues that need Covenant members' vote.

The Moderator serves one year following a one year term as Moderator-Elect. After the 2-year committee and service, the Moderator cannot serve either of those positions for 2 years. There are no term limits for any of the other Ministries. We encourage all HCC attendees to become involved in any of the ministries to learn and add ideas. However, only HCC Covenant members may be a Ministry chair and serve on Council.

Please consider joining a Ministry team and joining Council as a Chair of a Ministry. Council meetings are the 2nd Monday each month and usually meet via Zoom. Council and Staff meet together quarterly. We all work together, with the lead pastor and staff, to keep Harmony Creek growing and spreading our message that All are Beloved.

November Birthdays

- 9 Laura Boyd
- 10 Heather Denchik
- 11 Nathaniel Tims, Micah Harry
- 16 Terrie Kercher
- 17 Sonya Kirkwood-Williams, Joel Chaney
- 19 Claire Denchik
- 22 Amy Karnehm, Marvin Bracy
- 26 John Loomis

Don't see your birthday? Maybe we don't have it on file. Please contact the church office to update your information.

Voter Suppression Team

VOTER EMPOWERMENT MINISTRY TEAM
BECOME PART OF HARMONY CREEK'S NEW JUSTICE MINISTRY!

"Love is the fiery heart beating at the center of the urgent call for justice in our world. Love is the energizing force of justice that insists on fairness and equity for all . . . Without love there can be no justice."

How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey Toward Racial Justice by Jemar Tisby

In March 2021, Harmony Creek's Voter Suppression Work Group was formed, triggered by outrage over reports about Georgia State Representative Park Cannon's arrest and removal from the state capital for protesting as Governor Brian Kemp signed a sweeping voter suppression bill into law. Our Voter Suppression Work Group was intended to be a short-term justice ministry that would no longer be needed when federal voting rights legislation became the law of the land.

Sadly, we are still waiting for that important legislation and the struggle against voter suppression continues here in Ohio, as well as in Georgia and other states. Our group's "call" has recently grown from concern solely about voter suppression to championing voter empowerment. **No longer a short-term ministry, the Voter Suppression Work Group is now officially the Voter Empowerment Ministry Team, a full-fledged Harmony Creek Social and Environmental Justice Ministry!**

The importance of this new ministry is explained by Carol Costa, who became part of Harmony Creek this summer. Much of Harmony Creek's justice work, including racial equality, LGBTQ rights, economic justice, and environmental preservation, as well as voter suppression, are concerns of democracy. Carol shares, "Actions within the context of democracy are, in fact, social justice actions. Democracy is social justice in action."

Recent and ongoing legislative threats to human rights and environmental justice highlight the need for voter empowerment. Many voters do not realize the need to:

- Understand that their vote really does matter and, in fact, is the only way to change the status quo in a democracy;
- Vote for individuals who reflect their beliefs, rather than simply voting along party lines; and
- Participate in the effort to end gerrymandering in Ohio by working for passage of the proposed amendment to Ohio's Constitution in November 2024 which will establish fair districts.

It is now the task of our new ministry team to find ways to address these goals through education and action. It will take a team effort as we work together in faith to overcome the barriers of tradition, apathy, and hostility fueled by misinformation. Be part of this effort by joining us! Email justice@harmony.creek.org for more information.

HARMONY CREEK CHURCH

A United Church of Christ

www.harmonycreekchurch.org

901 E. Stroop Rd.
Kettering, OH 45429
937.434.3941

Currents Deadline is the 15th of each month

E-mail articles and news to:
office@harmony-creek.org

CHURCH STAFF

Michelle Wilkey
Lead Pastor
pastormichelle@harmony-creek.org

Rev. Raven Rowe
Youth Pastor
youth@harmony-creek.org

Melanie Woodruff
Director of Children's Ministry
children@harmony-creek.org

Sonya Harry
Office Manager
office@harmony-creek.org

Jeff Kerr
Custodian

Kat Ullery
Music Leader
music@harmony-creek.org

Leah McClain
Music Collaborator
piano@harmony-creek.org

ASSOCIATED MINISTERS

Rev. Jan Loomis
Associate Pastor for Cuban Partnership

Rev. Dr. Charlie Williams, Jr.
Associate Pastor for Ecumenical and Interfaith Outreach



SATURDAY, NOV. 11TH

THE 2023 SONKA FALL

GATHERING

We invite you to our SONKA Fall Gathering at David's UCC (with a Zoom option) from 9 a.m. to noon. We're looking forward to being together in-person and virtually as we move together into a new arrangement for our association that we believe will be helpful to our congregations, our association, and our conference as well.

Cost is \$20 registration fee.



SONKA

Southwest Ohio
Northern Kentucky
Association

Saturday, Nov. 11
9 AM – Noon

—
Regional Plan
—

2024 Budget
Approval
—

Business Meeting

**REGISTER AND GIVE
AN OFFERING AT THE
SONKA WEBSITE!**

Click 'SONKA News' on the
homepage and look for the
2023 SONKA Fall Gathering

www.sonkaucc.org