



Rocky Mountain Conference  
United Church of Christ  
Abbreviated Local Church Profile for Pastor

Gunnison Congregational Church  
Gunnison, Colorado

Part-time Pastor

July 7, 2020

*"God is able to provide you with every blessing, so that  
having all sufficiency in all things at all times,  
you may abound in every good work."  
(2 Corinthians 9:8)*

## INSTRUCTIONS

The Abbreviated Local Church Profile supports the calling and discernment of United Church of Christ congregations who are searching for part-time pastoral leadership. Through the Abbreviated Profile, the congregation will focus on three main questions: Who are we now? Who is our Neighbor? Who is God Calling us To Become? From those three questions the congregation will then determine the kind of pastoral leadership that is needed in this particular time in the life of the congregation and the wider community. This profile will serve as the basis of discernment for the search committee, as well as be a reliable expression of the church for pastors discerning own call.

Some questions are easy to answer. Some are not so easy. Prompts are provided to stimulate narrative response if needed; these italicized prompts are merely examples from which to choose or to inspire your own. Efforts to answer the questions will prompt conversations, explorations, storytelling and many prayers, and as the Spirit moves throughout the process, congregations will shape a collective articulation of Christ's leading (WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME).

Your conference will provide referenced material such as the 11-year Report and MissionInsite reports containing demographic information on your community. More information on types of pastorate in the United Church of Christ can be found in the Call Agreement Workbook. Be sure to use the Call Agreement Workbook's Scope of Work to describe in this Abbreviated Local Church Profile the position being sought.

When it is time for ministerial search, the conference can counsel you on posting the Abbreviated Local Church Profile together with your public listing at UCC Ministry Opportunities (<http://oppsearch.ucc.org>).

The last page of the Local Church Profile contains a statement that parallels the consent statement signed by ministers in the UCC Ministerial Profile. In keeping with the covenantal relationship between a church and those it seeks to call, this statement encourages an open, honest exchange of information. On behalf of the United Church of Christ, and on the basis of the best knowledge available to them, your conference staff will validate your completed Abbreviated Local Church Profile when it is ready to be shared in relationship with prospective new leaders.

## INFORMATION FOR NATIONAL DATABASE OF OPEN POSITIONS

Church name: Gunnison Congregational Church, UCC

Street address: 317 N Main St

Supplemental web links: [gunnisonucc.org](http://gunnisonucc.org), Facebook

Additional ecumenical affiliations:

Rocky Mountain Conference Western Association

Interfaith Alliance of Colorado

Rocky Mountain Conference Staff Contact Person

Name: Rev. Erin Gilmore

Title: Associate Conference Minister

Phone: 801-694-6300

Email: [erin@rmcucc.org](mailto:erin@rmcucc.org)

Summary Ministry Description: Our long term goal is to provide progressive Christian worship and faith opportunities for our community and, equally important, to become a center for a broad range of community activities by using our building for community meetings, offering rental space, and providing co-working facilities for organizations with which we share values and community betterment purposes. We expect this goal to always be at least slightly out of reach and require us to be more active in and focused on the community than focused exclusively or primarily on Sunday worship. To achieve this goal we need time, member commitments to active community involvement, and the good will and the assistance of those who share our purposes.

Current size of membership: 50

What we value about living in our area: We enjoy a lively population involved in and which supports the various causes in Gunnison County. Close proximity to year round outdoor recreation, and a thriving art and music scene, along with spectacular mountains surrounding beautiful green valleys and ranches, create an idyllic place to live. Gunnison is the home of Western Colorado University, which offers undergraduate, graduate, and extended study learning opportunities for all ages.

Position Title: Minister

Compensation Level: ½ Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines? Yes

Salary Basis (from the Call Agreement Workbook, equal to Cash Salary plus Value of Parsonage/Housing Allowance): \$24,125-\$27,250

Benefits (choose one):

Salary plus Benefits X

Salary includes Optional Benefits

No Benefits

## **WHO WE ARE NOW?**

1. This describes us

We are a generally older congregation of well educated, accomplished folks who value our membership in a cohesive group of like-minded neighbors committed to social justice, focused on the betterment of our community, and willing to accept and appreciate different paths to understanding the Holy in and among us. From the beginning 20 years ago our goal has been to seek our own space where we could worship, invite the community in, and provide opportunity for both learning and service. In 2018 we achieved this goal with the purchase of a building in the 300 block of Gunnison's downtown. With the renovation of this space we can now accommodate worship, fellowship, and service through an area dedicated to co-working rental spaces to organizations that share our community mission.

Our worship is primarily informal, clearly focused on Biblical example and truth, and we hope progressive and challenging. Our members like and support one another. In recent months members of the congregation have assumed responsibility, under the Worship Committee's guidance, for speaking about their personal faith journeys. These journeys have further solidified our commitments to accepting a wide range and variety of ways members understand and describe how we come to believe beyond ourselves.

2. Mission Statement

We exist to be an authentic, open and affirming community of faith centered in Christ. (Original 2000 Statement)

3. Our History, Briefly

Our congregation was established and celebrated its founding on Pentecost Sunday, 2000, based on the organizing work of two Mothers, Martha E. Gentry and Sylvia Peterson. In a generally conservative religious community we were established as open and affirming, progressive, and focused on social justice concerns. We became the place seekers turned to whose original religious experiences and foundations no longer accommodated their beliefs and values. Thus, we became in one sense the place for recovering Catholics, Methodists, Southern Baptists, and others, who either were asked to leave their earlier churches or because they could no longer believe as they were expected to, found an accepting church home.

Because our original goal was for a non traditional church and we began without a building, we have worshipped in at least four locations before purchasing our current storefront. These locations included a University Foundation building,

the local Catholic and Episcopal Churches, and a renovated historic school building in West Gunnison. This aspect of our history has resulted in making us hard to find and promoted a feeling of “temporariness” with the congregation. Nevertheless, we persevered toward our goal and celebrated its achievement with the purchase of our current space. Throughout the past twenty years, our lay and pastoral leadership have helped keep us together and focused on our mission for which we are grateful and appreciative.

4. Statistical Summary

- a. Active Membership: 25
- b. Total Reported Membership: 50
- c. Sunday Morning average attendance: 25 YTD 2020
- d. Number of children and youth: 1
- e. Average Attendance by children and youth: 1
- f. Members serving on Boards and Committees (not including ad hoc committees or small groups): 11
- g. Missions Giving, average over 5 years: 2019 \$2,800 2020 \$3,375
- h. Results of most recent stewardship campaign compared with previous year: 2019 \$65,400 2020 \$74,245.

5. How We Define Diversity

Diversity exists in the congregation’s broad array of beliefs, values, and approaches to understanding and describing how individuals and cultures design, develop, and carry out religious belief systems. While at this time we are a predominantly a white congregation, we hope to reach out and connect more effectively with the Hispanic and other immigrant groups in our community.

6. How We Structure Our Affairs

While the congregation as a whole makes decisions about such matters as choice of pastoral leadership and budget plans, it delegates to the Church Council the responsibility for general management of activities during the year. This group, made up of five elected members, coordinates our ongoing work and monitors income and expenditures. The three member Worship Committee currently organizes all worship activities including those conducted on Zoom. When we have pastoral leadership, the Committee works with and assists the pastor. The Stewardship Committee, usually comprised of three members, is appointed annually to conduct the stewardship campaign. A Personnel Committee of three members helps the Council in hiring for staff decisions, as well as developing and reviewing and recommending personnel policies. A pastoral care group is led by a member who recruits other members as needed. One volunteer serves as our connection to the Gunnison Food Pantry whose program is located within steps from our Church. We are not a top-heavy congregation, but aim to conduct our organizational work effectively and efficiently. We currently do not have a Sunday School in the traditional way, but on occasion have book study groups led by volunteers.

7. Staff Positions

Currently we have one staff position, namely that of one half-time pastor for whom we are recruiting. A part-time office manager position is authorized but unfilled at this time.

## WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

1. Our Advocacy Activities

Our history is replete with examples of our work in and for our community. We have provided leadership for and volunteers to work in many organizations, including Immigrantes Unidos, Hispanic Affairs Project, Gunnison Valley Health System, City Council, Habitat for Humanity, Gunnison Country Food Pantry, and the local youth suicide prevention program. This year we provided space for the Food Pantry to assume some functions of a food bank and store additional supplies in our building for later distribution to outlying food pantries. Some members provided leadership to the Habitat for Humanity affiliate to build a highly energy efficient home for a local partner family. As these activities may suggest, we have focused on our local community and not participated in global care and justice activities, although these are of interest to members of the congregation, particular any program dealing with environmental justice. Our move into our own building at the immediate edge of the Gunnison business district transformed us from hard to find to hard to miss.

2. Our Activities Connecting Us to the Wider United Church of Christ

We regularly elect two delegates to Conference and Association activities and, in addition, members have provided leadership at both levels. One member assisted in forming the Conference personnel policies and later the Endowment Fund. Another member has served in special Conference assignments including chairing two fitness reviews. Members have attended special Conference training focused on increasing church membership. We have hosted and provided leadership to the Western Association, including chairing one of its committees m

3. Check all of the following “statements of witness” that apply to your UCC faith community.

- a. ☐ Accessible to All (A2A)
- b. ☐ Creation Justice
- c. ☐ Economic Justice
- d. ☐ Faithful and Welcoming
- e. ☒ God Is Still Speaking (GISS)
- f. ☐ Immigrant Welcoming
- g. ☐ Inter-cultural/Multi-racial (I’M)
- h. ☒ Just Peace
- i. ☐ Global Mission church
- j. ☒ Open and Affirming
- k. ☒ Whole Earth Covenant

I. None

Insofar as the Search Committee is aware, none of the Statements of Witness other than those checked, have been suggested to the congregation for consideration. We began as an Open and Affirming Congregation and this has been a critically important part of our heritage.

4. Participation in Ecumenical and Interfaith Activities

Over the years our ministers and members have diligently attempted to participate in local ecumenical activities, mostly to no avail. One attempt was to replicate a program designed in a nearby community that connected churches in a network for the purpose of sharing information about and services to people who requested financial and other assistance from those churches. While the design was put in place with a number of churches making a commitment to participate, in the end only two did so-our church and the Catholic parish-and the attempt failed. The commitments by the other churches to participate clearly did not mean they actually intended to participate.

We have found it easiest to work with the local Catholic priest and some members of that parish, especially with regard to the Hispanic immigrant population. After an invitation to worship using the Episcopal Church facilities, we were (basically) kicked out with no explanation of their concerns. We hold membership in the Colorado Interfaith Alliance.

5. MissionInsite Comments

a. Trends

Much of the MissionInsite data are known to us: income disparities; poverty level; source of community ethnic diversity; education level; and attitudes about religious beliefs and practices. This report does not adequately represent the extent to which at least two factors influence community life and citizen decision making: namely 1) the basis of most of our economy is the tourist industry; and 2) the great divide between long-time residents and second homeowners, mainly but not exclusively from out of state.

Nevertheless, the report contains some insights that may be helpful to us, especially as we consider long-term planning into the next 20 years or so. These are: 1) increase in the Hispanic population; 2) expected decrease in 2) parent families with children coupled with increase of single women as heads of household with children; and 3) generally aging but still youthful population.

Finally, the Minister Priorities Report does not surprise us given what we often hear from friends and neighbors. However, it does point to concerns and priorities of residents, and therefore may provide program opportunities if we continue to expand our mission we'll beyond traditional Sunday morning worship and faith formation activities.

b. Internal Demographic Comparisons

Our internal demographics mirror this community with two major exceptions. While we currently are primarily a white congregation and are well educated, we are older than our community and do not have Hispanic members or attendees. We have maintained some connections to Western Colorado University, primarily through the LGBTQ group on campus, and have offered off-campus service opportunities to students. We do not regularly attract younger members of our community nor from the University.

c. Our Recent Focus

The focus of our congregation over the past two or three years has been upon securing and renovating our building, followed by settling in and catching our collective breath. During these activities we have not had pastoral leadership that helped us think ahead to who we wish to be and what we wish our mission to be well into the future. At the same time our lay leadership has remained strong and capable of thoughtful planning for worship and congregational care. We are now ready to more directly consider longer term planning specifically focused on the community outside our building.

d. Our Reputation

We often hear: “if I went to church, I would want to go to yours!” In addition, our church is often recognized by leaders in government and the nonprofit sector as a congregation actively involved in the community that be counted on to support significant community betterment causes.

e. What Visitors and New Members Say About Us

We most often hear new people comment on how friendly and welcoming our congregation is. We occasionally have summer guests who find our relatively informal services easy to attend and very welcoming. Recent out of state visitors found us as they drove through town and commented on how sensible it was to have a church that didn’t spend all its funds on a traditional building.

## **WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME?**

1. What God is Calling Us to Become

Our goal, stated most broadly, is to minister to our community. We expect this to take many forms, some of them non traditional “church” activities and most of them still unknown to us because they should arise from the concerns and felt needs of the community, rather than arise from what we perceive those needs to be. The MissionInsite Report suggests some potential community needs and goals, but as we begin a stronger outreach we expect to discover others.



2. Ministry Goals for the Next Minister

Four ministry goals, all related to each other, can be identified for the purpose of our profile, but we also expect our incoming minister to share those he/she brings as consistent with our setting and community.

First, we would like assistance and collaboration toward reaching out to our entire community in an effort to educate and stir interest in the messages of progressive Christianity. Importantly, we hope that our efforts toward this goal will also result in increasing our membership.

Second, we would like assistance and collaboration toward reaching out to the Hispanic population in our community. We do not propose to draw them from their current religious practices, if any, but rather serve as accomplices in working toward goals they identify.

Third, we seek to reach and minister to younger residents in our community and one starting place might be Western Colorado University.

Fourth, the MissionInsite Report suggests we may need to reconsider the ways we use various media to share our message.

3. Challenges We Face

We need assistance with long term planning to achieve our ministry goals and with new ideas and approaches to effective outreach.

## **WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?**

1. Talents, Skills, and Leadership Style We Seek

We seek as our first priority a minister who is an excellent preacher – engaging, interesting, challenging-committed to a progressive theology. We also seek a minister with a collaborative leadership style who recognizes, appreciates, and is not afraid to use lay skills.

2. Core Competencies We Seek

One of our congregants has listed core competencies we seek as: Communication skills, people skills, and passion for social justice. While it would be helpful to be reasonably well organized, we do NOT seek a CEO who's going to focus on organizing our office and keeping the building staffed, but rather a person who will get down in the dirt with us, help us refine our goals, occasionally prod us along to better outreach, suggest new tactics and strategies, and generally minister with us, not at us or for us. While our minister might occasionally be asked to provide counseling assistance, our stated policy is to limit such session to three (the request, exploration of request, and referral). Thus, we are not seeking a pastoral care minister in the usual meaning of that position.

2. We Expect to Adjust to a Part-Time Pastor

Beginning in January, 2020, when our former minister resigned, we have arranged and managed our affairs under the general guidance of the Church Council and the Worship Committee. We wished to have the opportunity to regroup, catch our collective breath, and think about the future. Our services have been led by the Worship Committee with congregants volunteering to speak about their beliefs and faith journeys, and more recently two ministers who reside in Gunnison County preaching in a traditional way. While this approach may seem foolish at best, it has worked for us. Attendance has stayed up over last year even when we worship via Zoom due to the pandemic; offerings are up to date and on track to meet our budget. We are in good financial shape and optimistic about the future, though we have not met in person since early March. Thus we have adjusted to being without a minister for a period of time, as well as adjusting to the exigencies of the pandemic. We conclude from this that we are a strong congregation, even if small, and committed to our ministry and mission.

The congregation has been warned by the Council and others that a part-time minister will really be part-time and that we can expect to closely follow Conference guidelines about what this means. Thus, a part-time minister cannot be expected to be all things to all people, but will, in fact, be limited in her/his duties. While the Worship Committee, given its recent responsibilities, may experience a bit of relief, we fully expect the laity to step up and make part-time ministry a reality. The Council will be responsible for monitoring and assuring that part-time is really part-time.

## STATEMENT OF CONSENT

The covenantal relationship between a church and those called by that church to serve as pastors and teachers and in other ministerial positions is strengthened when vital information is openly shared by covenantal partners. To that end, we attest that, to the best of our abilities, we have provided information in this profile that accurately represents our church. We have not knowingly withheld any information that would be helpful to candidates.

As the committee charged with the responsibility for identifying and recommending suitable new minister for our church, we have been authorized to share the information herein with potential candidates. We understand that a candidate may wish to secure further knowledge, information, and opinions about our church. We encourage a candidate to do so, recognizing that an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing and healthy relationships between calling bodies and persons seeking a ministry position.

1. Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile? *(for example, church council or consistory, transition team, etc.)*

Church Council, Search Committee, Congregants via written suggestions.

2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

None

Signed:

Marsha J. Rose, Chair, Search Committee

July 1, 2020

## VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

The congregation is currently in good standing with the association / conference named.  
Staff Comment:

To the best of my knowledge, ministerial history information is complete.  
Staff Comment:

To the best of my knowledge, available church financial information is presented thoroughly.  
Staff Comment:

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature: 

Name / Title: Rev. Erin Gilmore/Associate Conference Minister

Email: erin@rmcucc.org

Phone: 801-694-6300

Date: 8/27/2020

This document is created through support to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and is only possible through the covenantal relationships of all settings of the United Church of Christ.

*"Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God!'" – Mark 11:22*