

# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

First Congregational United Church of Christ  
Eagle River, Wisconsin

Settled Pastor

Northwest Association of the Wisconsin Conference

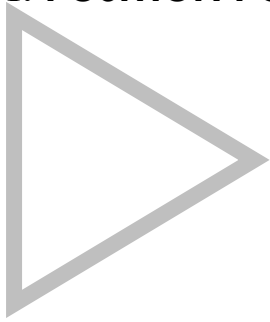
(April 19, 2021)

### LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE CONTENTS

- Position Posting
- Who Is God Calling Us To Become?
- Who Are We Now?
- Who Is Our Neighbor?
- References
- Consent and Validation

*“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)*

## 1. POSITION POSTING



- a. LISTING INFORMATION
- b. SCOPE OF WORK
- c. COMPENSATION & SUPPORT
- d. WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?

### 1a. LISTING INFORMATION

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**Church name:** First Congregational United Church of Christ

**Street address:** 105 N. First St. Eagle River, WI 54521

**Supplemental web links:** [www.eagleriverucc.org](http://www.eagleriverucc.org),  
<https://www.facebook.com/FirstCongregationalEagleRiver>

#### **Additional ecumenical affiliations:**

**Conference:** Wisconsin

**Association:** Northwest

#### **UCC Conference Staff Contact Person:**

Rev. Robert MacDougal, Associate Conference Minister

608-846-7880

[rmacdougall@wucc.org](mailto:rmacdougall@wucc.org)

### Summary Ministry Description:

We are moving away from a historically heavily structured church toward one that is readying itself for action in the community by living out its mission and vision statements. We are seeking a pastor who will partner with us in this effort and who is:





**What we value about living in our area:**

- We live in an area richly blessed by God's graces. There is an incredible natural beauty in our forests and lakes and a strong sense of community.
- We are a hard-working, educated, forward thinking congregation that enjoys the benefits of a rural lifestyle with many of the assets of a larger city.
  - Excellent schools
  - Newly renovated public library
  - Culture and arts
  - Community facilities and activities
- We have a population with a large diversity of life experiences, economic status and backgrounds.
- One of UCC's main camps, Moon Beach, is approximately ten miles from our church and we are fortunate enough to have access to the facility for occasional retreats and meetings.

**Current size of membership:** 249

**Languages used in ministry (*other than English*):** None

**Position Title:** Pastor/Servant Leader

**Position Duration:** Settled

**Compensation Level:** Full Time

**Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines?** Yes

## **1b. SCOPE OF WORK**

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**Our vision for our new full-time pastor would include the following (in no particular order):**

- Teach, mentor and empower our congregation at large and as individuals
- Guide us in discovering and growing into our God-given talents and embolden us to actively share them
- Be open and accessible to the church body, demonstrating a willingness to form relationships with individual members
- Actively develop and participate in church activities
- Be present in the greater community
- Have a heightened awareness of the needs of our neighbors

- Work with us on social justice issues
- Provide pastoral visits, support for the sick and for those in need of counsel
- Communicate clearly
- Be proficient with technology (or exhibit a willingness to learn)
- Facilitate our desire to serve our community and the wider world through mission

### **Core Competencies:**

We are seeking someone who is:

- Compassionate
- Empathetic
- Wise
- Forward thinking

## **1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT**

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### **Salary Basis:**

We offer a compensation package that is well within UCC Conference guidelines and is very generous. It includes salary plus housing allowance and other benefits.

### **Benefits:**

Primary benefits are:

- Medical, dental and vision insurance
- Life and disability insurance
- Pension

### **What is the expected living situation for your next minister?**

Living nearby with a housing allowance.

### **Comment on the residential/commuting expectations for your next minister.**

A housing allowance of \$18,000 per year provides the candidate the opportunity to choose their desired location, ideally near our church. There are homes and rentals available in or close to town, providing a variety of living situations including city, back woods or lake front options.

### **State any incentives:**

- Continuing education and study leave
- Moving expenses
- Allowance for books and periodicals



- One month paid vacation annually
- Sabbatical leave after an agreed upon time of service

**Describe peer and professional supports available for ministers in your association/conference:**

- Informal Wednesday morning pastoral breakfast group, currently meeting online
- Marywood Spiritual Group/Community
- Collaborative relationship with churches of other denominations in our area and good working relationship with neighboring UCC churches
- Wisconsin Conference support network

## **1d. WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?**

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**Describe the ministry goals you envision your next minister co-collaborating with the congregation to achieve:**

- Engage us in faith conversations
- Encourage spiritual growth
- Help us discover and utilize our God-given gifts
- Assist us in living out our mission and vision statements
- Encourage us to be emblematic of the values of the UCC in the wider community and in the world
- Expand both young and adult education
- Attract and involve more families with young children and expand youth programs

**Describe how your vision of the minister you are now seeking will assist the congregation in making an impact beyond its walls:**

- With strong leadership, a focus on social justice and in the spirit of our congregation's vision statement, we hope to be guided in differing ways of expanding our community presence.
- We would like to be provided with forward thinking sermons presented as a call to action in community specific ways.
- Using Jesus' teachings, actions and words as a guide, help us break down walls within ourselves, within our church and in the world in a productive and meaningful way.
- Help grow our congregation and attract people as they search for their new church home.

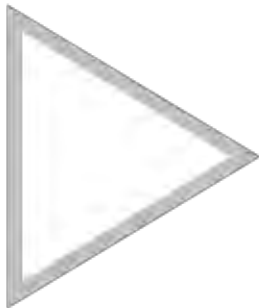
**Specify language requirements or culturally-specific capacities preferred in a next ministerial leader, and why those matter to the congregation's sense of calling:**

While we have no specific language requirements, our congregation is an open one. We prefer that "all inclusive" language be used (i.e., God is not identified as one gender).

**Based on what you have learned about who your church is, who your church's neighbor is, and who God is calling the church to become, describe four areas of excellence from *The Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry* that your next minister will display to further equip the congregation's ministry in these areas.**

- Building transformational leadership skills
- Engaging sacred stories and traditions
- Caring for all creation
- Working together for justice and mercy

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



“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37 NRSV)

**Who is God calling you to become as a congregation?**

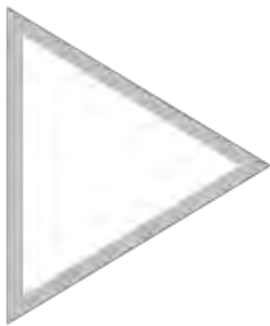
- Welcoming to all people. Our mission statement implores us to "...open our doors and hearts to all, in service and love, as modeled by Jesus Christ."
- Active servants in our community, utilizing all available resources and engaging as many members as possible.
- A growing congregation with outreach to young people and families while continuing to "feed" our existing members.
- Agents of healing working to unite people across religious, economic and cultural boundaries. Discerning how to live out our mission to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

**Describe how God is calling you to reach out to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of your community and congregation:**

Our church has always exhibited a strong desire to grow in faith together. We strive to recognize individual talents, but we need a leader who can help us "think outside the box" and cultivate those talents to serve the church and the community in a more extravagant way.



In 2016 our church studied the UCC conference-wide initiative: SH/FT: From Maintenance to Mission. As a result, we have moved from a board/committee-based governance to a more vision-driven Church. Council members have become strong listeners with more accountability and responsibility for the governance of the church. While the "shift" has allowed congregants to become more actively engaged in intentionally reaching inward, outward and forward to accomplish missions while building new relationships and working to discern God's intention for us as individuals and for our church as a whole, it is still a work in progress. We look forward to the wisdom and guidance of our new spiritual leader as we continue to grow into this new structure.



### **3. WHO ARE WE NOW?**

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22:39 NRSV)

- a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS
- b. 11-YEAR REPORT
- c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS
- d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING
- e. CHURCH FINANCES
- f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### **3a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS**

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##### **Describe your congregation's life of faith:**

Our congregation comes from a variety of religious backgrounds and our exploration of faith is a continuation of those differences. Our understanding of and relationship with God continue to evolve.

- Christ is within US; we are the body of Christ.
- "Christ has no hands now but ours, no feet now but ours." (Teresa of Avila)
- We see God as a God of ALL people: a mother, a father, a protector.
- We see God as both a noun and a verb.

**Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation:**

Our members embody the five practices of a fruitful congregation:

- Radical hospitality We take the practice of welcoming strangers seriously. We recognize that many people do not have a relationship to a faith community and we offer a genuine authenticity in caring about a newcomer.
- Passionate worship Our congregation exhibits an extraordinary eagerness to provide meaningful worship. We honor God through the careful planning of services, quality music and attention to detail. Our goal is to leave the worshiper sustained, challenged and with a feeling of being led by the Spirit.
- Intentional faith development The practices of faith are too demanding without support from others. We view the ministries of Christian Education, small-group study, choir and fellowship as integral components to our mission as a church.
- Risk taking mission and service We encourage and support members to "stretch" themselves...to do something for the good of others that they never would have considered doing if it were not for their relationship with Christ.
- Extravagant generosity Our congregation has survived because of the extraordinary sharing, willing sacrifice and joyous giving by our members, out of love for God and neighbor. Being able to give is viewed as a gift from God and many of our members are driven to be generous by a sense of mission and by wanting to make a positive difference in the world.

**Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers:**

We offer two services on Sunday (7:30am and 10:00am) and informal gatherings are a tradition before each service begins. Members meet and greet and visitors are welcomed. The musical prelude (either on our grand piano or our organ) signals the call to worship, which takes place in our Sanctuary with its beautiful natural light and altar which is enhanced by a stunning, handmade stained-glass cross.

The early service is scheduled to meet the needs of our members that have work obligations or want an early start to their day. There is an established order to each service with a different lay reader every Sunday. The use of audio/visual equipment with projection on our large built-in screen is often used. Either the pastor or a lay person offers a short children's sermon at the late service only.

The last Sunday of each month is a combined Unity Service at 9:00am that brings the whole congregation together.

Communion is celebrated on the first and third Sundays. It alternates between passing the bread and using individual cups, while the congregants remain in their pews, or by intinction with congregants coming forward to the front of the church. Everyone is welcome at our table and the sacrament is open to include children, as well as non-member adults.

Scheduled baptisms are usually part of a normal 10:00am service (if the participants wish) and are held at the baptismal font, which sits in a place of honor in the Narthex where everyone is able to see it each time they enter the Sanctuary. Once the ceremony is complete, the honored child is recognized by the pastor introducing them to the congregation while walking the aisles of the Sanctuary. All in attendance are able to welcome the new member of the family into the fold, sharing a moment of connection.

At the conclusion of our service, the hymn "Let There Be Peace On Earth" is sung every week. The tradition that goes along with this hymn has spontaneously evolved over the years. It originally began by holding hands with the person next to you and moved on to reaching across the aisle to hold the hand of that person. Currently we leave our seats to join hands forming one big circle, connecting us all as one family while we sing. We often catch newcomers by surprise with this practice...but what a wonderful way to meet them and make them feel welcome! Their hand is clasped by someone they don't know, and they are automatically "taken into the fold" as part of God's family! We hope to be able to resume this practice and truly "touch" each other again in the future when it is safe for all to do so.

**Describe the educational program/faith formation vision of your church.**

- Every Wednesday from September through May, our 6th grade students meet for Faith Formation Classes.
- Our youth take part in reading scripture, taking the role of acolytes, participating in Laity Sunday and the Christmas program, making Sunday morning announcements and by taking special collections for various missions.
- Adult opportunities in the past have included various six or eight week study groups including:
  - Unwrapping Your Gifts
  - Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations
  - The Last Week (Marcus Borg)
  - What St. Paul Really Said
- A book group, Knights of the Reading Round Table
- Seasonal online Advent and Lenten study groups

**Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.**

- As noted earlier, we recently "shifted" from our former governance to embrace a new structure that would support our ministry in today's world, encourage new ideas and reconnect our church with a sense of purpose.
- Currently the Church Council consists of the following elected members who oversee the primary leadership of the church: President, Vice President and 4 or 5 other elected members of the congregation.

- Ministries are of varying type and duration and are typically initiated by individuals or groups, encouraging all of our members to *Be the Church*.
- There are support teams to help enable the vision and ministries of the congregation, such as Financial Support, Property Support, and Personnel Support. (See Attachment #1, Flowsheet.)
- Paid staff includes:
  - o Office Manager (4 days per week)
  - o Part time Information Technology Director
  - o Part time Christian Education Director
  - o Part time Music Director and two additional part time musicians

**When it comes to decision-making, how many hours are spent in meetings per month?**

The Council meets once per month usually for 2 to 3 hours.

**Think of a time when action had to be taken quickly, for example when a crisis or disaster occurred. How was that accomplished?**

The Covid pandemic, without a doubt, posed a major challenge to our congregation. Our response is discussed in detail in section 3f, Historical Information.

If an emergency arises, it is usually taken care of by the pastor and staff. Council is informed and a review is scheduled for the next meeting. We are fortunate that we do not live in an area that experiences many disasters, natural or otherwise. We are confident that our congregation is able to pull together and assist/aid the community and its members in any way needed, whatever the situation.

**Can you provide the next minister with a copy of an organization structure, bylaws and/or annual report to further explain the patterns of the church's activity and governance?**

Yes. See Attachment #1, Flowsheet.

### **3b. 11-YEAR REPORT**

See Attachment #2 for the 11-Year Report, as provided by the Conference.

### 3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

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**\*\*Our church does not maintain an ongoing record of congregant statistics. The numbers provided are strictly subjective as provided by the Search Committee.**

**Describe those who participate in your church. \*\***

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	249	yes
Number of active non-members:	25	yes
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	274	yes

**Percentage of total participants who have been in the church: \*\***

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	75%	yes
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	20%	yes
Less than 5 years:	5%	yes

**Number of total participants by age: \*\***

0-11	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	<i>Are these numbers an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
6	15	5	18	30	50	50	60	40	Yes

**Percentage of adults in various household types: \*\***

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	1%	Yes
Households with minors:	9%	Yes
Single adults age 35-65:	10%	Yes
Joint households with no minors:	60%	Yes
Single adults over 65:	20%	Yes

**Education level of adult participants by percentage:**

Our church does not maintain a record of this information and our Search Committee has no basis from which to make these estimates.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:		
College:		
Graduate School:		
Specialty Training:		
Other (please specify):		

**Percentage of adults in various employment types: \*\***

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	70	Yes
Adults who are retired:	150	Yes
Adults who are not fully employed:	54	Yes

**Describe the range of occupations of working adults in the congregation:**

The range is vast, varying from service workers to degreed professionals.

**Describe the mix of ethnic heritages in your congregation, and the overall racial make-up. Most UCC congregations tend to describe themselves as “diverse.” Yet, the vast majority of UCC congregations are mono-cultural. What does diversity mean in your context?**

- We are primarily Caucasian; our backgrounds are eclectic.
- Our diversity is in our religious and economic backgrounds, cultures, sexual orientation and political persuasions but not in the color of our skin.
- During the summer months, our community's diversity increases significantly.

**Has your congregation recently had a conversation about welcoming diversity, or do you plan to hold one on the near future (perhaps using, for example, the Welcoming Diversity Inventory)? Please note the date. Comment after the exercise:**

According to the Welcoming Diversity Inventory, we have not recently had this conversation but we would like to pursue it with our new pastor. The Doctrine of Discovery Resolution was a

recommendation for discussion per a UCC Conference meeting and was explored during a Council meeting in 2018.

### 3d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING

**Complete the following chart. Please leave blank any fields that are not applicable to your congregation.**

These numbers are reflective of 2019. Due to the pandemic, 2020 has been very different for our Congregation.

Ways of Gathering	Estimated number of people involved in attendance	Who plans each of the listed gatherings? <i>(list any and all worship planners, such as various lay leaders, pastors, musicians, other staff)</i>
Adult Groups or Classes	10-12	Pastor, CE Director, Lay Leaders
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>	1	Pastor
Children's Groups or Classes	6	CE Director and Pastor
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	150	Pastor
Church-wide Meals	30	Church Council
Choirs and Music Groups	20-25	Musical Director
Church-based Bible Study	10-12	Pastor and Lay Leader
Communion <i>(served how often?)</i>	Twice monthly	Pastor (and helper for intinction)
Community Meals	100	Led by UCC Women's Fellowship: God's Country Kitchen, Cranberry Fest Luncheon, NATH (Northwoods Alliance for Temporary Housing) Soup Fundraiser.
Confirmation <i>(number confirmed last year)</i>	0	
Drama or Dance Program	50	Members of the congregation
Funerals <i>(number last year)</i>	2	Pastor
Intergenerational Groups		



Outdoor Worship	2	Pulpit Supply Pastors
Prayer or Meditation Groups	8	Eagle River Mindfulness Group
Public Advocacy Work	150	Relay for Life Team UCC, NATH , FORK (Feed Our Rural Kids), Back Bay Mission (Biloxi, MS), Pine Ridge Indian Reservation (SD).
Retreats	12	All 2020 retreats were cancelled.
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community		
Weddings ( <i>number last year</i> )	1	Pastor
Worship (time slot: 7:30)	30-40	
Worship (time slot: 10:00)	50-75	
Young Adult Groups or Classes		
Youth Groups or Classes	6	CE Director

**List all members or regular participants in your congregation who are ordained, licensed, or commissioned ministers. Indicate those with current United Church of Christ Three-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a congregation) or Four-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a ministry beyond a congregation):**

Name	Three- or Four- Way Covenant? (3 or 4 or No)	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired? (Y or N)
Dale Bishop	Ordained		Interim for us in the past, now Pulpit Supply	Y
Patricia Tucker	Ordained		Our past pastor, now Pulpit Supply	Y
Gary Gilbert			Lay Minister	Y

Bob Rice	Ordained		Pulpit Supply	Y
Pat Mallory	Ordained		Pulpit Supply	Y

**If one or more previous pastors or retired ministers currently hold membership in the church, describe their role(s) in the life of the congregation:**

Pat Tucker was a previous pastor with us and is now a member who regularly attends the early service. Now that she is eligible, she is also willing to provide Pulpit Supply for our congregation.

**List all current staff, including ministers. Exclude the position you are seeking to fill. Indicate which staff person serves as head of staff.**

Staff Position	Head of Staff?	Compensation (full time, part time, volunteer)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
Interim Pastor	Head	Full time	Council	October 2020-current
Office Manager		4 days a week.	Pastor	22 years
CE Director		Part time	Pastor	8 years
Music Director		Part time	Pastor	8 years
IT and Office Assistant		Part time	Pastor	Open

**Reflection: After reviewing the congregational demographics and activities above, what does this information reflect about your congregation's overall ministry?**

The demographic breakdown may lead one to correctly assume that we are an aging congregation. However, it does not reflect just how active we are. Numbers cannot convey our strong feeling of family and togetherness, despite our varying backgrounds. The demographics also point to the fact that there are activities that could still be pursued. Our church currently advocates for unaffiliated groups by providing meeting space for Boy Scouts, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Adult Exercise (yoga and meditation) through Nicolet College and educational activities, such as Learning in Retirement.

### 3e. CHURCH FINANCES

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Current annual income (for the year ended December 31, 2020)

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$158,609
Endowment Proceeds ( <i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i> )	\$0
Endowment Draw ( <i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, "drawing down the principal"</i> )	\$0
Fundraising Events	\$0
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$10,672
Grants	\$0
Rentals of Church Building	\$2,674
Rentals of Church Parsonage	N/A
Support from Related Organizations ( <i>e.g. Women's Group</i> )	\$0
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$12,500
Other (specify):	\$0
Other (specify): Includes miscellaneous support such as flower and offering envelope, underwriting and proceeds received under the Payroll Protection Program	\$23,068
TOTAL INCOME	\$207,523

**Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year):**

\$217,159.

See Attachment #3, 2021 Budget Summary. A detailed budget can be provided upon request.

**Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support. What is the percentage?**

For the year ended December 31, 2020, the salary and housing costs represent 26% of our total operating expenses. Total pastor salary and all benefits represent 33% of total operating expenses.

**Has the church ever failed to pay its financial obligations to a minister of the church?**

No.

**Is your church 5-for-5, i.e. does it include each of the following contributions during the church year? (*indicate those included during the most recent fiscal year*)**

☒ Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM – Basic Support)

☒ One Great Hour of Sharing

☐ Strengthen the Church

☐ Neighbors in Need

☒ Christmas Fund

**In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered? If calculated as a percentage of operating budget, what is that percentage? (*recommended 10%*)**

Our OCWM annual basic support is budgeted as an annual contribution. Our 2020 contribution was approximately 9.8% of the total expenses for the year.

**What is the church's current indebtedness?**

None

**Total amount of loan debt:** \$0

**Reason for debt:** N/A

**Are capital and other payments current?** N/A

**If a building program is projected or underway, describe it, including the projected start/end date of the building project and the total project budget.**

N/A

**If the church has had capital campaigns in the last ten years, describe:** N/A

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact

**If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe:**

N/A

**Describe the prominent mission component(s) involved in the most recent (or current) capital campaign.**

A portion of money raised for renovations during a 2008 Capital Campaign was given to Global Missions and to Moon Beach Camp.

**Does your church have an endowment?**

Yes

**What is the market value of the assets?**

\$1,026,433 as of 12/31/2020

**Are funds drawn as needed, regularly, or under certain circumstances?**

As needed, from three funds that do not have distribution restrictions.

**What is the percentage rate of draw?**

There is no mandatory rate of draw for any of our endowment funds.

**Describe draw on endowment, if any, to meet operating budget expenses for the most recent year and the past five years:**

While there is technically no automatic draw on any endowment fund, three funds allow monies to be used, generally limited to 5% of the preceding June 30 valuation. None of the Continuing Ministries distributions were used in 2020; however approximately \$13,000 and \$11,000 were received in 2019 and 2018, respectively. In addition, approximately \$12,500 was received in 2020, 2019 and 2018 for general maintenance. In prior years, additional withdrawals have been approved for unexpected repairs in accordance with the terms of the respective fund.

**At the current rate of draw, how long might the endowment last?**

The length of time will depend on the market as it relates to the investments and fees.

**Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:**

**Other Assets:**

**Reserves (savings):**

No reserves other than endowment funds.

**Investments (other than endowment):**

N/A

**Does your church have a parsonage?**

No

**Describe all buildings owned by the church:**

Church building and property, plus a vacant lot directly across First Street.

**Describe non-owned buildings or space used or rented by the church:**

Moon Beach, a UCC Camp, used for retreats, meetings, conferences, etc.

**Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs?**

All

**Reflection: After reviewing the church's finances and assets described above, what does this information reflect about your congregation's mission and ministry?**

We have had some very generous members who have left the church with endowments that we currently have invested with a financial service. As of 12/31/2020 we currently have 8 investment funds that we oversee. Three are scholarship funds, with one being for general distribution and two for specific vocations. The amount of the scholarship(s) is dependent on the earnings of each fund, based on calculations. One investment is specific for mission work and is also dependent on earnings. We have a separate investment set aside for sabbatical purpose. Three accounts do not have restrictions on what they can be used for but do have restrictions on how much can be taken from each, in a given year. We receive monies quarterly from a donor that controls their own investment.

### **3f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

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**Name one to three significant happenings in the history of your church that have shaped the identity of your congregation. Add the most important event in the life of your church in the past 10 years.**

With the advent of Covid-19 our eyes have been opened to many challenges, including a short time of being without a minister. Our church, however, has turned this situation into a very positive experience and, led by our interim pastor, we have created new venues of worship and utilized modern technology to experience both recorded and real-time services. There have also been small group worship opportunities as well as a few outdoor worship gatherings. We are a very giving and active church and this time has strengthened that commitment to service. An

example is our Lenten worship group, which organized soup suppers to be made and delivered to our area homeless shelter during Lent, in lieu of our traditional soup suppers at church. In 2008, we embarked upon a Capital Campaign to remodel our Sanctuary and upgrade the kitchen and Sunday School room. Due to the financial and physical generosity of our congregants and their love for our church, we were able to create a worship space that is an absolute work of art. It is adorned with beautiful pieces created by some of our talented artist-congregants, such as the stained glass cross on our altar and a wooden carved piece that decorates the Narthex. The space is reflective of the majesty of the Northwoods that surrounds us from the beautiful wood floors to the inlaid rock center aisle to the gorgeous handmade copper baptismal font. It is carefully curated each season by our Sanctuary Arts Group (SAG) who spend many thoughtful hours highlighting its beauty with decorations fit for such a splendid space.

Over the years, we have had pastors that have come to us as students and have matured during their service to us. Pastor Jeff Wartgow is an example of this - and he stayed with us for 15 years! We've also had pastors that hold PhDs as our servant leaders. Our congregation responds positively to these leaders' great spirit and guidance and has embraced them all.

### **Describe a specific change your church has managed in the recent past.**

In 2017, our congregation accepted the challenge of the UCC initiative: "Shift: From Maintenance to Mission." (<https://www.wcucc.org/resource-center/shift/>) This initiative embraces the concept that it is time to explore new ways of doing ministry (some ways we don't even know) and let go of the old groaning lament that things "just aren't the same anymore." It is an initiative peppered with the unknown, asking questions such as "What possibilities will emerge if we shift from trying to maintain what we have, to stretching ourselves and permitting mission?"

Unfortunately, our Shift was in its infancy when our pastor resigned to accept a position in a different state. This unplanned leadership vacancy resulted in a waffling of the forward movement of this campaign and left the effort temporarily "rudderless" and seeking guidance. The lack of pastoral leadership, however, did *not* leave our congregation fractured, negative or broken. While some would have preferred to return to the old ways, the congregation came together as one body and opted to move forward. Today, we continue to live into the changes of Shift. It is an evolving process, and we look forward to a new pastor who can help us smooth out and complete this transition.

While our response to Covid has been previously addressed, it bears an additional mention here since it remains one of the biggest challenges our church family has encountered in the recent past. Our Sanctuary has been closed since April 2020 and keeping the "flock fed and together" has been an enormous undertaking. Once the gravity of the pandemic was recognized, our Church Council kicked into overdrive and tackled many hurdles, one at a time. Congregants "stepped up to the plate" and contributed by starting prayer chain groups, making regular phone calls to those shut in, making grocery and drug store trips for others and sending daily "Sheltering Thoughts" emails. We have been determined to weather this event in the best and safest way possible and look forward to the day our church doors will open again.



**Every church has conflict, some minor, some larger. “Where two or three are gathered, there will be disagreement....” Describe your congregation’s values and practices when it comes to conflict.**

As a church, we rarely have a conflict of any consequence. The Council and pastor consistently encourage and value input from the entire congregation on any subject. We respect and listen to each other and tend to be able to work things through without generating divisiveness. We have no specific policies or protocols in place for dealing with conflict although we do have a Pastor Parish Relations Committee (PPRC) available to assist our pastor confidentially, should conflicts or concerns arise.

**Ministerial History (*include all previous ministerial staff for the past 30 years*)**

Staff member’s name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Jane Courtwright	1.5	Y
Mary Ann Biggs	6	Y
Pat Tucker	5	Y
Phil Garrison	5	Y
Jeff Wartgow	15	Y

**Comment on what your church has learned about itself and its relationship with persons who provided ministerial leadership:**

We have been called to grow and change with each new pastor and to move forward with open hearts, viewing change as part of our faith journey. We do, however, hope for a long-term relationship with our new pastor.

**Has any past leader left under pressure or by involuntary termination?**

No.

**Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?**

No

**Has a past pastor been the subject of a Fitness Review while at your church?**

No



## 4. WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39 NRSV)

a. COMMUNITY VISION

b. MISSION InSite

### 4a. COMMUNITY VISION

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#### **How do the relationships and activities of your congregation extend outward in service and advocacy?**

The ministry of our congregation focuses not only on local activities and services but we also reach beyond our borders to many wider missions outside our community.

- Caritas An inter-faith ministry that helps those in need with bills, rent and food.
- Northwoods Alliance for Temporary Housing An organization that owns and operates Frederick Place, a 16-bed emergency homeless shelter dedicated to ending and preventing homelessness. We have members that do volunteer work there and our congregation also supports them monetarily.
- Tri-County Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault A local agency that provides a 24-hour crisis line and safe shelter at Lily's House for victims. UCC has helped furnish rooms and provide emergency phones for those in need.
- Warm the Children A nationally recognized program that seeks out needy families in the Northwoods and provides winter clothing to their children.
- Fill-A-Backpack Backpacks are filled with school supplies and provided to local children in need each year before the school season starts.
- Relay for Life Our team, UCC (United Caring Characters), enthusiastically holds many fund raisers during the year (daffodil sale, cheese sales, food sales) to support the American Cancer Society. In 2019, our team raised \$5,235 but unfortunately, most events for 2020 were canceled due to Covid.
- Souls for Souls An annual shoe drive our congregation holds to provide shoes to those in need in third world countries. (To date we've collected 1,116 pairs!)
- Hope Phones An ongoing mission our congregation sponsors where used cell phones are collected and refurbished for use in third world countries. (To date, 276 phones have been sent on to a new life!)
- Listen Up! A program our congregation initiated in cooperation with the Starkey Hearing Foundation where unused hearing aids (and batteries) are collected, refurbished and given to those who cannot afford them.
- Heifer Project Our congregation has sponsored a "Market Sunday" where parishioners can contribute toward the purchase of farm animals through Heifer International where third world communities are given the means to provide for themselves.

- Feed Our Rural Kids (FORK) A non-profit organization created to provide nutritional support to school aged children from food insecure homes within the Northland Pines School District.
- Adopt-A-Highway Our congregation sponsors a stretch of local highway and regularly removes trash, recyclables and litter from the area.
- Melody of Compassion An offering we collect every Sunday at the same time we "pass the plate" for our regular offering. The coins dropped in the offering plate (the "melody") are used for gas cards, meal tickets or to help with an emergency need for any person that comes into our church asking for assistance.
- New Year of Giving In the first quarter of each year, our church allocates at least \$1,000 for contribution to charities "nominated" by congregants. Each charity nominated is usually given at least a \$100 donation, as deemed appropriate by our Council.
- Weekend Backpack In conjunction with another local church, we support a local program to supply kids with a backpack filled with ready-to-eat or easy-to-prepare food that they take with them from school on Fridays to ensure they have food over the weekend
- Domestic mission trips with teams from our congregation to:
  - Pine Ridge Ogala Lakota Indian Reservation, South Dakota. The reservation is large and has immense needs commensurate with its grinding poverty. Our team made two trips there to lend aid in building structures and extending goodwill.
  - Biloxi, Mississippi Disaster Relief. A UCC team visited the area post Hurricane Katrina to assist in rebuilding and distributing donations.
- Foreign mission trips by individuals from our congregation to:
  - El Progreso, Honduras. In partnership with a UCC team from Green Bay, over a 10 day period, two homes were constructed for two needy families in the area.
  - Wai, India. In partnership with Global Ministries, a 30-day medical mission was undertaken providing outreach clinics to rural India villages.
- Veteran's Camp Camp American Legion. Sponsored attendance in 2017.
- Moon Beach We are privileged to be very close to one of UCC's premier outdoor camps, where we help with camp maintenance and clean up.

**Describe your congregation's participation in meetings, relationships and activities connecting the wider United Church of Christ (association / conference / national setting).**

We send representatives to all Wisconsin Conference and Association meetings.

**Many local churches love to tell the story of what they are doing in the community to transform lives. Some have identified certain aspects of their witness into the wider community using language shared with other UCC congregations. (Find more information as desired at [ucc.org](http://ucc.org).) Check any statements below that apply to your UCC faith community.**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accessible to All (A2A)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Peace                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creation Justice                        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Global Mission Church      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Justice                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Open and Affirming (ONA)              |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faithful and Welcoming       | <input type="checkbox"/> WISE Congregation for Mental Health   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> God Is Still Speaking (GISS) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other UCC designations:               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Border and Immigrant Justice            | <input type="checkbox"/> Designations from other denominations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inter-cultural/Multi-racial (I'M)       | <input type="checkbox"/> None                                  |

**Reflect on what the above statement(s) mean(s) to your community. Is your congregation interested in working toward any of the above statements of witness in the near future?**

We are living out our commitment to openness, regardless of race, gender, age, sexual orientation and/or disabilities. We have banners prominently displayed outside the church announcing we do believe *God is Still Speaking* and *All are Welcome*. This is a notable statement and affirmation not paralleled by any other church in our community.

**Describe your congregation's participation in ecumenical and interfaith activities (with other denominations and religious groups, local and regional).**

- Ecumenical Christmas Cantata involves all our local churches and welcomes community members that are not part of a church community as well.
- Ecumenical Good Friday and Thanksgiving services rotate between different "host" churches every year.
- Longest Night Service offered by our congregation to remember personal "losses" over the previous year. Advertised and open to the entire community.
- We host various speakers and musical performances. The public is invited and welcomed at no cost.
- Confirmation trips for our youth in partnership with Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

**If your congregation has a mission statement, how does that mission statement compare to the actual time spent engaging in different activities? Think of the range of activities from time spent gathering, to governance, to time spent going out.**

Our congregation has a mission and a vision statement both of which serve as a guiding force for work within our congregation and in the community at large. Our Council traditionally recites this mission statement at the beginning of each meeting and uses it as a reminder and cornerstone for all decisions made. Time is well balanced.

**Mission Statement:**

Empowered by the Holy Spirit and with the help of God, we open our doors and hearts to all, in service and love, as modeled by Jesus Christ.

**Vision Statement:**

We aspire to serve God both inside and outside our congregation by:

- Deepening our connection with God through prayer, worship and service
- Inspiring others through bold vision and spirit led innovation and creativity
- Creating an environment of trust and mutual accountability, empowering each other to pursue new ways to serve God and each other
- Committing ourselves to cultivating deep and abiding relationships and a loving atmosphere so that we may learn from each other
- Discovering and using our God given gifts and building community through work in ministry teams
- Committing ourselves to serving those in need, both locally and globally, in Jesus name, through advocacy, financial support, and hands-on ministries

**Reflect on the scope of work assigned to your pastor(s). How is their community ministry and their ministry in and on behalf of the wider church accounted for in the congregation's expectations on their time?**

We encourage our pastor to be involved and engaged with the community but do not demand a specific amount of time. We trust the pastor to reasonably weigh his/her time spent in the wider community versus time spent on behalf of our congregation and achieve a reasonable balance at his/her own discretion.

## **4b. MISSION InSite**

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**Comment on your congregation's MissionInsite report with data for your neighborhood(s) or area. What trends and opportunities are shown?**

- Our congregation's MissionInsite report covers the zip code 54521. This is a very large area of land approximately 226 square miles with 32 square miles of water area.
- The zip code has a population of about 7,950 with a density of 33 people per square mile which is slightly less than the average density of other areas in the U.S.
- The number of seniors and middle-aged adults is extremely large (approximately 6,750) while the number of children under 18 is small (approximately 1,200)

- Current racial/ethnic percentages are 95% White (non-Hispanic) and 5% comprised of Native American, Asian, Hispanic and/or Black (African American).
- Education attainment for the resident adults includes:
  - Less than high school diploma 7%
  - High school graduate (or GED) 35%
  - Some college, no degree 23%
  - Associate Degree 9%
  - Bachelor's Degree 18%
  - Graduate or Professional school degree 8%
- As is true with most parts of the country, vehicles are the most common form of transportation to places of employment and the majority of workers in 54521 get to work in 30 minutes.
- In summary, according to the MissionInsite report, this is the "story view" of our community:
  - Population change in the next 10 years is predicted to have *moderate growth*
    - Of note is the fact that the growth in our area has increased substantially since Covid began, probably related to people leaving large cities. Accordingly, the MissionInsite numbers may not be totally accurate or truly reflect the actual numbers of the population of our area.
  - In the 10-year future, a *moderate increase* is expected in school age children.
  - Compared to the state of Wisconsin, families with children are *somewhat less* likely to live in two parent households.
  - The general education of adults 25 and older is *mixed*.
  - The racial/ethnic mix of the area is *very homogeneous*.
  - Compared to the state of Wisconsin, the median family income is *somewhat less*.
  - Compared to the state of Wisconsin, the number of families in poverty is *somewhat above*.
  - White collar and blue collar workers are *closely split*.
  - *White "non-Hispanic"* is the largest percentage of the population.

**How do your congregation's internal demographics compare or contrast to a) the neighborhoods adjacent to your church, and b) other neighborhoods with which your church connects?**

The population of the Northwoods is homogenous across all counties. The demographics of our zip code are similar to surrounding areas.

**How are the demographics of the community currently shaping ministry, or not?**

Much of our church's outreach and mission are focused on meeting the basic needs of our community. Poverty, addiction, socio-economic disparities and racism are issues that inform and drive our missions. As a need becomes apparent, we willingly respond.

**What do you hear when you talk to community leaders and ask them what your church is known for?**

- We are seen as the most progressive church in the area.
- Our congregation stands for social justice.
- We are open to all.
- The scholarships we sponsor are extremely generous. We are known in the community as "the scholarship church."
- While we are known for granting scholarships, we are equally well known for our extravagant generosity in many other areas, such as participating in community events, outreach missions and generally doing what needs to be done.
- Our music is an important part of our worship and the level of excellence is well respected in the community.

**What do new people in the church say when asked what got them involved?**

- Overwhelmingly, people appreciate the warm welcome they receive at our church and are quick to embrace the non-judgmental and friendly attitude of our members.
- People like that our church is not "pushy" or evangelical and that we believe (and practice) our core values. *Be The Church* is a truism to many.
- Newcomers are quick to be invited to join in church activities but not pressured to participate.
- Our church Sanctuary is inviting, bright and embodies the essence of the Northwoods.
- Many people respect the fact that our church provides meeting space for organizations not affiliated with us, such as AA and NA.
- Many of our past pastors delivered sermons that were creative, relevant, theologically sound and spoken in understandable lay terms that drew people into our congregation.
- Many people have been attracted to our church – and stayed – based on our outstanding musical and arts programming.





## 5. REFERENCES

Name up to three people who have agreed to serve as phone and written references. Advise the three references: “The contact information you provide may be shared publicly. Please use contact information that you feel comfortable giving to candidates so they can reach you with their questions.”

Make sure they are not members of your church but are persons who know your church well enough to be helpful to candidates seeking more information. Request a letter from each reference in answer to the four prompts below. Attach the letters (up to three) as desired.

### REFERENCE 1

Ann Wahlers  
Pulipt Supply and Friend of our Church.  
715-499-1332  
[annwahlers@charter.net](mailto:annwahlers@charter.net)

### REFERENCE 2

Glen Svetnicka  
Executive Director, United Church Camps, Inc.  
715-891-0821  
[gsvetnicka@ucci.org](mailto:gsvetnicka@ucci.org)

### REFERENCE 3

Mary Anne Biggs  
Former Pastor and Friend of our Church.  
715-891-8722  
[Maryannebiggs32@gmail.com](mailto:Maryannebiggs32@gmail.com)

## PROMPTS FOR REFERENCES

Describe some areas of strength in this church's ministry.

Describe some areas for improvement in this church's ministry.

Describe a significant experience you have had of this church's ministry.

Anything else you wish to share.



## 6. CLOSING THOUGHTS

a. CLOSING PRAYER

b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT

c. CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION VALIDATION

### 6a. CLOSING PRAYER

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Loving God,

Thank you for gifting us the essential role of being your church.

Empowering God,

Thank you for equipping your church for the important mission of loving you, our neighbors and creation.

Compassionate God,

Thank you for reminding your church of your mission's essential responsibility to care for the least of these as we would care for Jesus.

Gracious God,

Thank you for your guidance as we discern your will, with our best wisdom, to find our servant leader to guide us to be your church, participate in your mission and care for the most vulnerable in all times not merely in times of pandemic.

We know, loving God, you are hearing us better than we are speaking. We offer this prayer.

May we continue to grow in your light and love.

Amen.

## 6b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT

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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. The Search Committee is the primary author of this document with input from the Finance Committee, Church Council, office staff and members of the congregation at large.
2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile: We would like to note that our Council and our congregation are moving into phases of in-person worship for the first time in over a year. Council has developed a comprehensive plan to move us into comfortable and safe in-person services, meetings and gatherings in the next six months with a concentration on watching County Health Department statistics regularly and developing a plan to move forward and scale back as allowed and/or needed.

Signed:

Trista A. Langley-Tyler

Search Committee Chair

04/18/2021

## 6c. VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

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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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Rob MacDougall", written in a cursive style.

Signature:

Name / Title: Rev. Rob MacDougall/Associate Conference Minister

Email: rmacdougall@wcucc.org

Phone: 715-308-6120

Date: April 19, 2021

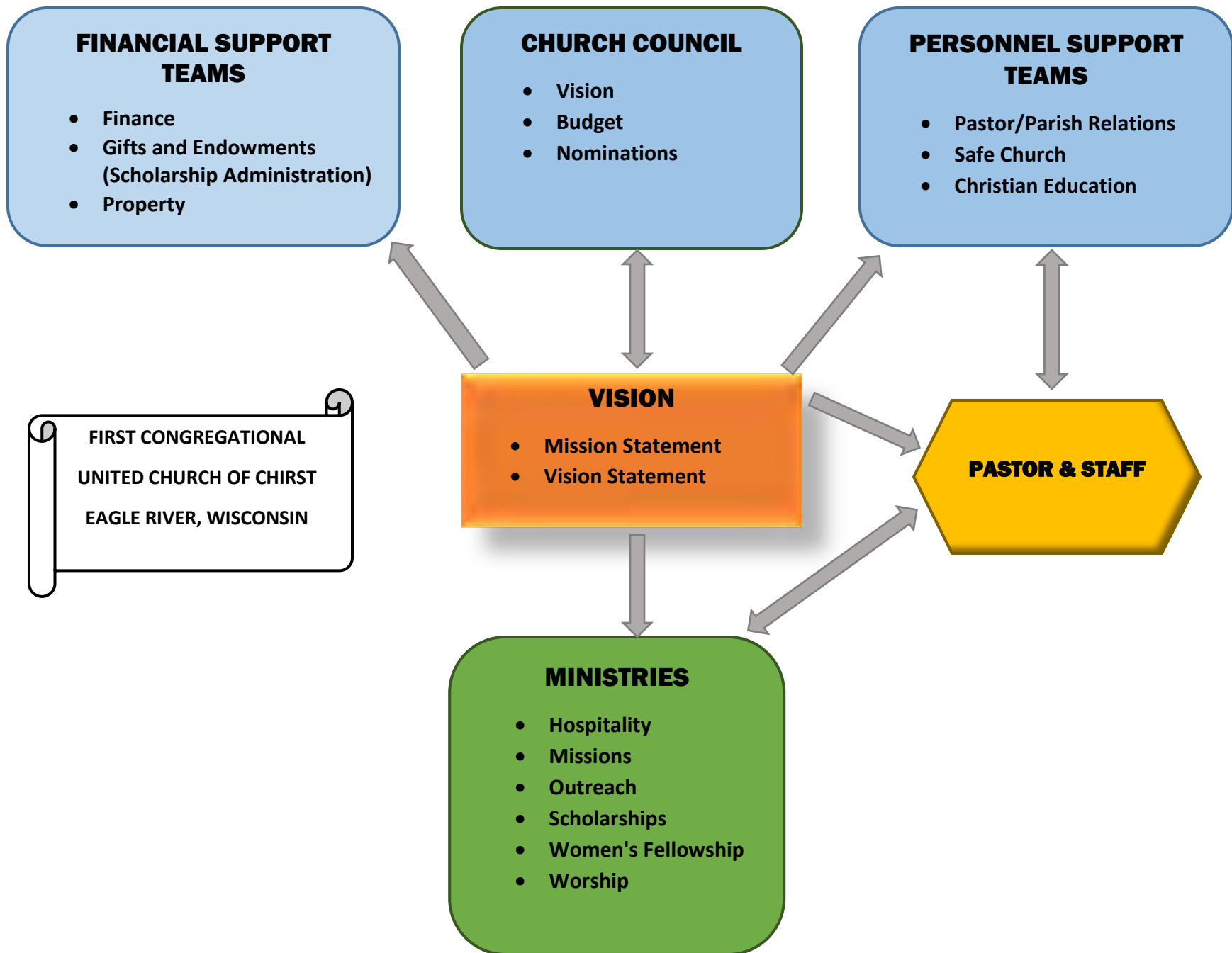
## ATTACHMENTS:

1. Flowsheet 12-17-20 (page 35)
2. 11-Year Report-First Congregational UCC, Eagle River (page 36)
3. 2021 Budget Summary (page 37)
4. Letter of Reference from Pastor Mary Anne Biggs (page 38)



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***



**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**ELEVEN YEAR CHURCH PROFILE BASED ON DATA REPORTED IN UCC YEARBOOKS**



**Church#:** 860620

**Assoc:** 828

**Schedule:** 0

First Congregational UCC

Eagle River

WI

54521

YEAR	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	CONFIRMATION	CONFESSION	TRANSFER OR REAFFIRM	DEATHS OR TRANS OUT	OTHER LOSSES	NET MEMBS ADDS-REMOVED
2009	361	148	45	4	1	13	5	2	11
2010	358	134	35	0	0	7	1	9	-3
2011	364	120	27	0	0	9	3	0	6
2012	379	136	12	4	13	2	4	0	15
2013	385	126	15	0	12	0	6	0	6
2014	360	117	38	0	6	0	10	21	-25
2015	366	113	38	8	0	6	8	0	6
2016	364	97	34	0	2	0	4	0	-2
2017	356	90	36	0	0	0	5	3	-8
2018	341	80	12	9	0	0	8	10	-9
2019	300	75	6	0	0	0	0	41	-41

YEAR	CURRENT EXPENSES	CAPITAL PAYMENTS	BASIC SUPPORT	TOT OTHER UCC GIVING	TOTAL OCWM	OTHER GIFTS	WIDER MISSION	BASIC SUPP% CURR LOCAL	TOTAL EXPEND	PLEDGES AND OFFERINGS
2009	\$168,014	\$150,252	\$20,040	\$3,515	\$23,555	\$8,806	\$32,361	11.93	\$350,627	\$170,329
2010	\$172,304	\$77,445	\$20,520	\$30,793	\$51,313	\$10,957	\$62,270	11.91	\$312,019	\$190,916
2011	\$212,352	\$68,715	\$19,000	\$6,033	\$25,033	\$23,669	\$48,702	8.95	\$329,769	\$175,971
2012	\$210,141	\$0	\$19,000	\$5,838	\$24,838	\$0	\$24,838	9.04	\$234,979	\$174,976
2013	\$238,546	\$0	\$19,008	\$5,664	\$24,672	\$0	\$24,672	7.97	\$263,218	\$179,520
2014	\$233,050	\$0	\$19,008	\$18,241	\$37,249	\$0	\$37,249	8.16	\$270,299	\$196,853
2015	\$235,844	\$0	\$19,008	\$14,417	\$33,425	\$0	\$33,425	8.06	\$269,269	\$184,795
2016	\$244,203	\$0	\$19,008	\$13,207	\$32,215	\$0	\$32,215	7.78	\$276,418	\$196,529
2017	\$234,130	\$0	\$19,008	\$3,695	\$22,703	\$0	\$22,703	8.12	\$256,833	\$179,225
2018	\$197,744	\$0	\$19,008	\$3,889	\$22,897	\$0	\$22,897	9.61	\$220,641	\$183,713
2019	\$203,554	\$0	\$19,008	\$4,435	\$23,443	\$0	\$23,443	9.34	\$226,997	\$170,671

% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	TOTAL ADDITIONS	TOTAL REMOVALS	CURR LOCAL EXPENSES	TOTAL OCWM	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
2014-2019	-16.67	-35.90	-84.21	-100.00	32.26	-12.66	-37.06	-16.02
2009-2019	-16.90	-49.32	-86.67	-100.00	485.71	21.15	-0.48	-35.26

Please note: Zero values ("0\" or \"\$0\") may reflect missing information in some years. Christian Education/Faith Formation refers to Church School Enrollment for all figures before 2007.



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC EAGLE RIVER:**  
**2021 BUDGET SUMMARY**

**Inflows**

Pledges, loose offering, rents, gifts, etc.	\$ 217,759
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**Outflows**

Christian Education (youth and adult)	\$ 1,150
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Diaconate Expenses	\$ 9,750
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Mission Expenses	\$ 22,175
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One Great Hour of Sharing, Scholarships, Christmas fund

Our Church's Wider Mission, Offering Envelopes

Stewardship Campaign

In/out Purchases	\$ 1,800
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Operating Expenses	\$ 39,605
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Salaries and Benefits	\$ <u>143,279</u>
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	<b>\$ 217,759</b>
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*A detailed 2021 budget is available upon request.*



# Oakland Christian United Church of Christ

Mailing Address:  
PO Box 2008  
Suffolk, VA 23432

Physical Location:  
5641 Godwin Blvd.  
Suffolk, VA 23434

Phone: 757-255-4353

*"Whoever you are or wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!"*

**REVEREND MARY ANNE BIGGS, PASTOR**

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April 7, 2021

Beloved,

One of the hardest things I have done in ministry was to leave First Congregational UCC – Eagle River. One of the easiest things I have done in ministry is to write this letter of reference, and it is a privilege and a pleasure to do so.

The words of benediction that I say each week include these, "that we are embraced in the love of Christ." When I speak of being embraced in the love of Jesus what we are also embracing is his mandate to love the least, the last and the lost. This is a mandate that this congregation wholeheartedly embraces. Through various outreach programs to serve those on the margins, First Congregational UCC – Eagle River has brought closer the type of world that Christ intends, one that is more just and generous.

This church makes it clear that their members are an inclusive congregation of faithful people. They love their neighbors in tangible and resourceful ways. They are always active in ecumenical community ministries that make a difference.

First Congregational UCC – Eagle River empowers the laity with an attitude of permission-giving. Adult classes, prayer groups and service projects have all bloomed from the suggestion of congregants, supported by staff, but initiated and brought to fruition by lay men, women and youth. This church is never stagnant, and while they honor and treasure their past, their focus is on a new and exciting future.

While I realize that no church is perfect, one would have to search far and wide to find a better one.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Mary Anne Biggs