



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

**First Congregational Church of Walla Walla, Washington**

## **LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE**

Seated Pastor

April 15, 2022

### **1a. LISTING INFORMATION**

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Church name: First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

Street address: 73 S. Palouse St., Walla Walla, WA 99362

Supplemental web links: [firstchurchuccww.org/](http://firstchurchuccww.org/)

Facebook: [ubne.ws/FCCWW](https://www.facebook.com/ubne.ws/FCCWW), Instagram: [instagram.com/fccwallawalla/](https://www.instagram.com/fccwallawalla/)

Conference: Pacific Northwest Conference United Church of Christ.

UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person: The Rev. Mike Denton, PNCUCC, 325 N. 125th St., Seattle, WA 98133, 206-725-8383, [office@pncucc.org](mailto:office@pncucc.org), [Pncucc.org](http://Pncucc.org).

#### **Summary Ministry Description:**

First Congregational Church of Walla Walla represents the clearest expression of progressive theology and inclusive ministry in the Walla Walla Valley. Our congregation is growing larger and younger, and having weathered the universal challenges of the pandemic, this community of faith has strong momentum and enthusiasm. We want to deepen our commitment to social and environmental justice in our community, with the understanding that these values are aligned with the Gospel and God's call on our lives. We are a congregation committed to the essential and challenging work of diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism as an expression of our faith journey.

We value and respectfully acknowledge that our community is located on the native lands of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla people and the Nez Perce tribes in the Walla Walla Valley. We value the beauty and abundance of our natural environment, which includes many waters, the foothills of the Blue Mountains, rolling Palouse country, and fertile soil that hosts wheatfields, grapes, alfalfa, vegetables, flowers, and trees. We also value that there are three institutions of higher education in the area, and educational opportunities abound for people of all ages. Finally, we value the many organizations that exist to care for the people and animals of this Valley.

**Current size of membership:** 123 as of 3/21/22

**Languages used in ministry other than English:** Sometimes Spanish is sung in hymns.

**Position Title:** Reverend

**Position Duration:** Settled – a called position intended for longer-term ministry in which the minister moves church membership to the congregation and moves standing to related association.

**Compensation Level:** Full Time. The total support package meets conference compensation guidelines.



## 1b. SCOPE OF WORK

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**Our Public Voice:** First Congregational Church of Walla Walla prioritizes thoughtful and compelling worship services, led by inspiring preaching that interprets sacred texts through the lens of our lived experiences. Walla Wallans who are not part of our congregation (non-Christians and other unchurched progressives) often speak to the importance of First Congregational Church in our community. First Congregational Church provides symbolic and timely responses to many local, national and global issues, and we hope our minister will continue the tradition of compassion, vision and voice that play a significant role in guiding our community's conscience.



**Pastoral Care:** Our community of faith will need occasional support and nurturing from our church leader. Our minister will need to listen, care for and, when necessary, refer our parishioners to appropriate support. At times, we may need to be appropriately re-directed so that our gifts are being best utilized, along with affirmation for our efforts.

**Administrative Capacity:** As a small faith community, our minister will require strong skills across a broad spectrum of congregational needs and initiatives. With so many irons in the fire, it's essential that FCC's pastor is organized and manages time effectively. The capacity for self-care and work-life balance will also be essential.

## 1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

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**Salary Basis:** \$68,000-78,000- DOE

**Benefits:** Salary includes Optional Benefits

The minister must secure personal housing within the Walla Walla community.

The new minister is expected to live in the Walla Walla Valley and be part of our local community in faith and service.

FCC offers increased vacation over time, performance-based raises, and a sabbatical during the sixth year of employment.

The new minister is encouraged to develop a close and supporting relationship with the UCC Conference. The pastor can also meet with local clergy for fellowship and discussion.

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

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**Personal Spiritual Growth:** FCC would like to continue building upon its momentum in Christian Education. In recent years we have taken on a part-time youth director who has successfully implemented the *Our Whole Lives* program and has started a regular youth group program that has weathered the challenges of the COVID era. Our Sunday School program has also remained strong, with growing numbers of children taking part. Sustaining these offerings and helping us expand into service experiences that bring our children into greater contact with their “neighbor” they are called to love is an appropriate next level of focus. We would also like to build on the recent momentum of book and covenant groups for adults in order to expand our collective understanding of what it means to translate the teachings of our faith into a world in need of love and compassion.

**Collective Outreach to Our Communities:** The plural of “Community” here points to the importance of ministering to those who have identified FCC as their spiritual home, as well as the call to serve those beyond our walls. Many who call FCC their faith community were drawn here because of the Church’s outward expression and commitment to social justice. A central goal for FCC ministry is to help establish and strengthen the spiritual underpinnings of justice and service throughout the Walla Walla valley.

**Stewardship of God’s Creation:** Our congregation undertook a spontaneous challenge to raise funds for the installation of a solar array on the roof of our fellowship hall in spring 2019. Within three months of casting this vision, we raised all of the funds to complete this inspiring project. This is a good example of how our community takes its call to environmental stewardship seriously. As we move further into the 21st-century, we would like to lean into the Bible’s call for a Creation-centered faith community.

### **Additional items of importance:**

Our pastor will help our congregation identify challenges our church might turn into opportunities for responding in the caring, compassionate footsteps of Jesus. This would likely happen in the spirit of the collective outreach and stewardship goals elaborated above.

While all church operations take place in English, we recognize that a fuller expression of our welcome would require us to expand access by deploying Spanish, ASL, and other inclusive modes of fellowship.

Based on what we’ve learned about ourselves, who our church’s neighbor is, and who God is calling us to become, we share below three areas of excellence from *The Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry*. We hope our next minister will display these traits to further equip the congregation’s ministry.

Numerous citizens of our Valley look to our community of faith as a symbolic and practical leader on the central issues facing our community, our region, our country and our world. On a regular basis our church and various leaders within it are called upon to respond to the leading issues of our day including reproductive health, homelessness, hunger, addiction, racism, civil rights, and support for the LGBTQ+ community. At our best, we are God’s hands and feet, offering love, compassion, and service to all of God’s beloved children.

Our next minister will help us realize our goals already elaborated in section 1d.

### Our goals

- 1) Personal Spiritual Growth
- 2) Collective outreach to the community
- 3) Stewardship of God’s Creation

### The (correlated) Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry

*Engaging Sacred Stories & Traditions*  
*Working Together for Justice & Mercy*  
*Caring for All Creation*



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

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*"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)



This unique congregation is a mixture of old and young, of seekers and established parishioners, of by-the-book and freewheeling styles; we come together for fellowship and to support our local community. We need someone to support and guide us in our mission and service. We are a committee-led congregation with a strong collaborative relationship between the various committees and pastoral leadership. We seek someone who will embrace the diversity of our congregation and community and help build upon our strengths as we grow into the next generation.

Our Statement of Identity really says it all: We are a congregation of diverse Christian believers empowered by love and guided by the Holy Spirit. It is our mission to enable personal spiritual growth, collective outreach to the community, and stewardship of God's creation. We are an open and affirming church. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey you are welcome here.

We expect our clergy to embrace this statement and work with our dedicated congregation to keep its promise. Our next pastor will motivate us to bring in new people and ideas that help challenge us to more fully express these core values. We recognize that the life of faith is not defined by reaching specific goals, but by committing to the ongoing work of loving and serving our communities, both inside and outside the church walls. To this end, we seek a pastor who will walk with us, and encourage us along the journey.

God is calling us to reach out and address the emerging challenges and opportunities of our community and congregation in several specific ways.

In recent years, our trustees have prioritized important facilities improvements to help reinforce our programming goals as a church. In 2020 and 2021 we undertook new flooring, painting, and cabinetry for our upstairs Sunday School spaces. These efforts dovetailed with new curricula and staff additions our church has adopted in response to growing numbers of young families our church has been serving in recent years. Our church has added trained instructors in the OWL (Our Whole Lives) program aimed at serving young adolescents within our church and our Valley as a whole.

An on-going experiment for our church has been adapting, improvising, and overcoming the challenges posed by the recent pandemic. Our church responded in a host of different ways while remaining committed to safety, maintaining fellowship, community and compassion throughout a spiritually critical period in our congregants' lives. To this end, we formed a reopening with care task force, established a virtual worship team, and our Christian Education innovated creative ways to meet outside and provide an important element of continuity in the lives of our young people. As a result of this skillful translation of challenge-into-opportunity, we are witnessing a number of young families 'come back' to our church with strengthened ties.

### 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

Over the course of the past year, our church undertook a discernment process to review our long-standing definition of membership. Following a resolution at our 2021 annual meeting, a series of listening sessions, surveys, and then a formal vote in the early weeks of 2022, our congregation reached a widely held consensus that our definition of membership no longer suited us, and was thus revised to be more inclusive:

*Any person may be received into the membership of this Congregation who covenants to honor and support the church's identity, purpose, vision, and mission..."*

- **Statement of Identity**  
We are a congregation of diverse Christian believers empowered by love and guided by the Holy Spirit. It is our mission to enable personal spiritual growth, collective outreach to the community, and stewardship of God's creation. We are an open and affirming church. Because of who you are and where you are on life's journey, YOU are welcome here!
- **Purpose of the United Church of Christ**  
To love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves.
- **Vision of the United Church of Christ**  
United in Christ's love, a just world for all.
- **Mission of the United Church of Christ**  
United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.



As evident in the statements above and the sincere dialogue that informed this discernment process, our community of faith seeks to provide a place for all of God's children to pursue their own journey alongside one another.

The life of this congregation is trending in really positive ways. As a community of faith, we know what it means to live through emotional and financial hardship. We grappled with low morale and worked hard to overcome the slippery slope of losing sight of our mission and purpose. In this moment, though, this is not a congregation in need

of significant healing or building. There is energy and enthusiasm here, and we seek a pastor to walk with us, to encourage us, to guide us, to redirect us when necessary, and to care for us. For over a decade we have come to see ourselves as a small (but growing) mission-driven church that happens to be housed in a very large building. Our purpose as a community of faith is not simply to “grow” but to be a congregation of diverse Christian believers empowered by love. Some of these positive trends include:

1. We would like to deepen our connection to our community’s poor, outcast, or otherwise marginalized members.
2. We expect to continue our exploration of traditional vs. creative approaches to worship.
3. We expect to strengthen our vision of ecumenism, despite resistance from more conservative religious leaders in our community.
4. We expect our youth programming to expand.
5. We hope to continue attracting young families, and to continue expanding our preschool, primary and teen programming as part of our revitalized commitment to Christian Education.
6. We hope to increase the diversity in our congregation, consistent with the evolving demographics of our community.
7. We hope to strengthen our historic ties with Whitman College, engaging new generations of inquiring, thoughtful college students.
8. We envision an ongoing effort to plan for the ongoing maintenance and continued use of our historic building and strategic downtown location.
9. Even as we celebrate the installation of solar panels, and move to paperless worship, we would like to become still more intentional about our identity as “stewards of God’s Creation.”
10. We foresee the continued growth of covenant groups, book groups and other issue-oriented small-group adult ministries.
11. We seek to leverage our under-used space within the facility to advance the mission of organizations and initiatives that resonate with the goals of our ministry.

Worship resides at the very heart of our community of faith. We value thoughtful and creative worship, grounded in liturgical tradition. For many years the congregation has prioritized the musical aspects of worship. We have paid section leaders in the choir, and a bevy of guest musicians ranging in style from jazz to bluegrass to classical. Our proximity and relationship with Whitman college affords us the opportunity to bring in outstanding student and faculty musicians to supplement or cover for our staff of talented, paid musicians (pianist /organist, choir conductor, and section leaders).

a. We hold one worship service weekly, a contemporary service within a richly liturgical format. English is the spoken language although we often sing Spanish language hymns (usually in English, with occasional attempts at Spanish). Prior to COVID, communion was offered once a month and served by intinction, with the elements delivered to those who are unable or choose not to come forward to receive them. We celebrate the Day of the Dead (Dia de los Muertos) each year, with our young people being a principal part of the event, and we have had several “blessings of the animals” in our sanctuary. In recent years the Christmas pageant, in honor of our commitment to inclusivity, has included children decked out in many of their favorite costumes. Who says the

donkey and sheep can't be accompanied by a lobster or Batman? Our commitment to ecumenism has led us to create two services featuring a Rabbi, an Imam, and a Christian pastor, with music from each of the three traditions. We have welcomed a Buddhist and a Native American healer to lead our worship. Our worship services rely on tradition and creative experimentation. We draw upon a variety of resources to enrich our worship experience and enlarge our understanding of our own faith.

**b.** We welcome people with developmental disabilities or mental illness but offer no special ministries to/for them.

**c.** Worship service is planned through collaboration among a worship committee, the pastor, and the musicians, who work together to create meaningful, theme-led services.

**d.** Our congregation appreciates formal and informal styles of preaching. Content is usually dictated by the Lectionary and the liturgical calendar. We value thoughtful, non-ideological, personal, challenging preaching that is open to questions and doubts, encouraging of compassion, and based on Biblical text.

**e.** We seek a pastor who is willing to collaborate with musicians and deacons, willing to challenge us but respectful of traditions. This person should be open to suggestions but willing to lead.

**f.** We use the New Century Hymnal as well as Taize chants and songs from the Spirit and Song books (published by OCP). We purchase a yearly license from One License so that we have legal permission to use songs from the Spirit books and from sources online such as OCP.

**g.** The musicians are always looking for song/hymn sources that will inspire our congregation to sing and worship more fully, but New Century will remain our primary hymnal.

**h.** We value inclusive language, recognizing the important theory behind it, but when inclusive language interferes with the well-loved poetry of the familiar, the musicians simply tell people to sing the words they know and love.

At FCC, education and faith formation are high priorities. COVID posed some problems in 2020, 2021 and a bit into 2022, although our youth programming has remained remarkably persistent throughout a challenging time. Our preschool and primary Christian Education team has implemented the *Spark*, *A Joyful Path*, and *All Creatures Great and Small* curricula in recent years. These programs were modestly impacted by virtual programming during COVID protocols. Our youth programming includes *Our Whole Lives* (healthy sexuality), presented every other year to a fresh cohort of 7th-9th graders (also open to non-congregant youth). We also offer programs like environmental leadership (*Peace Jam*), and contemporary reads like *I'm Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* (Erika L. Sánchez) that highlight social justice issues. For adults, we offer covenant groups and book groups on relevant topics, especially social justice (white privilege, anti-racism, immigration, etc.).



### 3b. 11-YEAR REPORT

*This information is presented at the end of this document.*

### 3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	118	
Number of active non-members:	5	
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	123	

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	56	
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	19	
Less than 5 years:	25	

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>
12	7	3	10	11	20	20	20	15	✓

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	5	✓
Households with minors:	30	✓
Single adults age 35-65:	20	✓
Joint households with no minors:	30	✓
Single adults over 65:	15	✓

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	5	✓
College:	40	✓
Graduate School:	40	✓
Specialty Training:	15	✓
Other (please specify):		

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	40	✓
Adults who are retired:	50	✓
Adults who are not fully employed:	10	✓



The range of occupations of working adults in the congregation include artists, authors, educators, health care workers, business professionals, food service workers, administrative workers, non-profit professionals, farmers, ministers, volunteers, and retired church members.

The mix of ethnic heritages in our congregation includes families from the following origins: European (largest group), Latino/Latina (second largest group), African American (third largest). There are many more European families than those of Latino/Latina or African American heritage. Our diversity is represented in our community social justice networks. We have been community partners with Walla Walla Immigrant Life Coalition (WWIRC), Walla Walla Black Lives Matter, and the Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless. Several marches have begun on our grounds, including the Women's March. Our social justice work is also represented in our open and affirming congregation and the people who identify as being part of the LGBTQ+ community.

Our congregation has had many conversations about welcoming diversity. In recent years we have held two different small group sessions, one on white privilege and one on race and Black Lives Matter.

### 3d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING

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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	Members
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>	2	Pastor
Children's Groups or Classes	15	Christian Education, Children's
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	140	Pastor and Worship team
Church-wide Meals	75	Diaconate- monthly potlucks
Choirs and Music Groups	15	Choir Director and Organist
Church-based Bible Study	10	Pastor
Communion <i>(served how often?)</i>	Monthly, 70	Pastor and Worship Team
Community Meals	100	Soup Lunch Team
Confirmation <i>(number confirmed last year)</i>	5	Youth Minister and Pastor
Drama or Dance Program	200	Music and Theater at the Spire, dramatic student readings, visiting theater artists presentations, concerts with local students
Funerals <i>(number last year)</i>	5	Pastor
Intergenerational Groups	25	Covenant group leaders
Outdoor Worship	6	Those interested in "Wild Church"
Prayer or Meditation Groups	6	Pastor
Public Advocacy Work	10	Mission and Social Concerns Committee
Retreats	15	Women's Fellowship, Youth Minister
Weddings <i>(number last year)</i>	1	Pastor and Diaconate
Ecumenical Gathering	15	Walla Walla Friends/Quakers

Worship (time slot: 10am Sunday)	70-110	Pastor, Worship Team
Worship (time slot: Fridays at 6)	15	Open Door Fellowship
Young Adult Groups or Classes	20	Youth Minister, OWL volunteers
Youth Groups or Classes	12	Youth Minister
Yoga/Exercise Class	12	Contract Employee

Members or regular participants in our congregation who are ordained, licensed, or commissioned ministers:

Name	Three- or Four-Way Covenant? (3 or 4 or No)	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired? (Y or N)
Terry Rice	No	Hospice Chaplaincy	As needed pastoral care and pulpit supply	No
Dorothy Knudsen	No	NA	As needed ministerial duties	Yes
Adam Kirtley	No	College Chaplaincy	Former FCC Minister for Worship	No

Current staff, including ministers:

Staff Position	Head of Staff?	Compensation (full time, part time, volunteer)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
Pastor	Yes	Full time	Trustees	6 years
Admin. Assistant	No	Part time	Pastor, Trustees	5 years
Custodian	No	Part Time	Pastor, Trustees	3 years

Accountant	No	Part Time	Independent Contractor, Treasurer, Trustee	1 year
Choir Director	No	Part time	Pastor	25 years
Organist/Pianist	No	Part time	Pastor	20 years
Yoga Teacher	No	Part Time	Independent Contractor, Trustee	Starts April 2022

Youth Minister	No	Part Time	Pastor	5 years
Sunday School Director	Yes	Part Time	Pastor	1 year
Sunday School Assistant	No	Part time	Sunday School Director	1 year
Nursery Care Lead	No	Part time	Sunday School Director	Starts April 22
Nursery Assist	No	Part time	Sunday School Director	Starts April 22

Webmaster	No	Part-time	Pastor, Admin Assistant	3 years
Outreach Coordinator	No	Part-time	Pastor, Trustees	In budget, will be hired after new Pastor established

### 3e. CHURCH FINANCES

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Current annual income (dollars used during most recent fiscal year):

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$150,815
Endowment Proceeds ( <i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i> )	\$33,160
Endowment Draw ( <i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, "drawing down the principal"</i> )	\$NA
Fundraising Events	\$NA
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$8750
Grants (PPP for 2021 payroll)	\$23,000
Rentals of Church Building	\$11,265
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$NA
Support from Related Organizations ( <i>e.g. Women's Group</i> )	\$NA
Transfers from Special Funds	\$24,000



Other (specify): Mission and Social Concerns	\$4000
Other (specify):	\$NA
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$254,990</b>

**Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year):** \$240,660

*The church fiscal year 2022 budget, statement of financial position and 2021 statement of activities follow at the end of this document.*

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

29%

**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?**

We do one special donation and budget from our General Operating Expenses. For 2022 this will be \$7,000

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

Not in debt.

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. No current Capital Campaign underway. Preliminary discussions started regarding the future remodeling of our Fellowship Hall and Landscape.

If the church has had capital campaigns in the last ten years, describe:

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
2019	Solar Panel Installation	\$60,000	\$69,000	49 new solar panels on the Fellowship Hall to offset power usage.

**Supporting endowment funds of the church:**

The market value of the Marcus Whitman Homes Endowment assets is \$1,081,179 We take an annual draw of \$6,600 to support building maintenance. Rarely are there additional draws. The draw in 2021 was \$6,600; 5 years ago, in 2016, it was \$11,600. This is a decrease of 39%. We only take endowment income for operating expenses and are working to increase the balance in our endowment funds each year.

Currently our endowment is growing to generous donations each of the past several years to both our General and Building Maintenance Endowments.

### **Other Assets**

Reserves (savings): \$119,685

The church does not have a parsonage.



### **Buildings owned by the church:**

Beautiful, historic sanctuary with large windows, lots of natural light, pipe organ, and pew seating for 200+.

Historic 4-floor former parsonage building that now houses the church office, library, Sunday school rooms, Chapel, bathrooms, several meeting rooms used for recovery group meetings, and basement storage.

Fellowship Hall and kitchen were constructed in the 1990s with seating for 150+ people. A large atrium connects the Sanctuary, Parsonage building, and Fellowship Hall.

Large main parking lot and small overflow parking lot.

There are no non-owned buildings or space used or rented by the church.

### **Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs?**

Sanctuary, atrium, Fellowship Hall, bathrooms, kitchen

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

Our church is in a strong financial position. The income of our endowments and the pledged and unpledged giving of our membership covers operating expenses. We have an adopted Endowment Policy to inform how Trustees recommend to Council use of funds. We have a substantial endowment and beautiful facility that provides financial security for future church generations. We are looking to increase community use of our facilities and generate income from additional use to help offset ongoing building maintenance expenses.

## **3f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

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Here we offer two significant happenings in the history of our church that have helped shape our identity.

### **1. Entering into the Covenant of Openness and Affirming with the National UCC, 2000.**

This was a several-year process that caused some hard feelings among church membership but has since become a pillar of our congregational identity and mission. Several years after the original decision, our interim minister prompted the congregation to re-evaluate our Open and Affirming status. We became more pro-active in the ways we demonstrated to our church members and the greater Walla Walla area that we were truly a church that welcomed people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. We are honored to serve as a much needed and appreciated spiritual sanctuary for the LGBTQ+ community.

### **2. 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 2014**

Our 150th anniversary celebration ran for eight months in 2014. We began with church artifacts displayed throughout the sanctuary, ran a full-page story in the local newspaper about the history of our church (the oldest Congregational church in Washington State), were "visited" by two important historical figures from the earliest church (one being the second ordained female minister in the Congregational Church), created a time capsule as a Sunday School project with church artifacts special to the children, and ended with a special church service and luncheon in October 2014 attended by church members, community friends of the church, and members from out of town. The celebration included three new hymns commissioned specifically for the occasion, as well as a musical adaptation of our statement of identity.

In addition to the discernment process (to examine the degree to which our long-standing definition of membership reinforced our core values as a community of faith) elaborated above:

As part of our commitment to environmental justice and addressing climate change, in the spring of 2019, the church launched a special capital campaign to fund the installation of a 60-panel solar array atop the fellowship hall. This project has served to reduce our electric carbon footprint and energy bill by 40%. Just as important, it galvanized our church family's commitment to more fully express its values of environmental stewardship.

Every church has conflict, some minor, some larger. "Where two or three are gathered, there will be disagreement...." Here we describe our congregation's values and practices when it comes to conflict.

Following the retirement of a long-serving, very successful shared ministry of a husband-and-wife team in the 1980s and 1990s, the church entered a challenging period. Two consecutive seated pastors ended their tenure with the church under difficult circumstances, and conflict emerged within the congregation about how best to navigate those transitions. Some individuals left the congregation, and in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, morale within the congregation was low, thus the church functioned from a posture of fear and scarcity.

At that time, ordained ministers from within the congregation stepped forward to help provide worship leadership and pastoral care for the church. This move significantly alleviated the financial pressures felt by the congregation and elevated the sense of shared ministry and responsibility within the community of faith. The seeds of healing and unity that were planted at that time are bearing fruit in the congregation now.

FCC's earliest days in Walla Walla: The Rev. Peasley B. Chamberlain first opened First Congregational Church of Walla Walla in April 1864, five years before Washington Territory entered statehood. The state's first established congregational church, its first home was on the current site of The Marcus Whitman Hotel, 6 W. Rose St. Seven charter members officially organized it on Jan. 1, 1885: the Rev. Cushing Eells, wife Myra Fairbanks Eells and son Edwin Eells, the Rev. Peasley B. Chamberlain and wife Alice, and J.W. McKee and wife Mary. In January 1900, the church moved to its current location at 73 Palouse St

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

Name	Type of Ministry	Years Served	UCC Status
Patricia and Roger Robbennolt	Settled Ministers	1982-1996	Yes
Glenn Kalkbrenner	Intentional Interim	1996-1997	Yes

William Berney	Supply Minister	1997	Yes
Joseph Murphy	Settled Minister	1997-2002	Yes
Jim Castrolang	Intentional Interim	2002-2004	Yes
Melinda Townsend	Intentional Interim	2004	Yes
Greg Kammann	Settled Minister	2004-2009	Yes
Melinda Townsend	Associate Pastor	2005-2007	Yes
Cecelia McKean (from congregation)	Shared Ministry	2009-2015	Yes
Adam Kirtley (from congregation)	Shared Ministry	2009-2015	No
Nathaniel Mahlberg	Settled Minister	2015-2022	Yes

Following the 15-year tenure of the Robbennolt shared ministry, the church entered a period in which relationships with clergy were, at times, rocky. The circumstances that complicated clergy/church relationships were wide-ranging. The Robbennolt ministry was marked by strong, charismatic leadership, as well as the benefit of two individuals who were able to leverage their respective skills to meet a wide variety of needs within the congregation. With their departures, the congregation may have struggled to adjust to a new style (and smaller scale) of ministry.

Beyond this though, the settled pastorates following the Robbennolt's ministry were marked by other difficulties that were of a more personal nature and external to the congregation. Membership, attendance, and morale within the congregation were very low in the early 2000s, and the financial crisis of 2008 compelled existential questions within the church.

In important and lasting ways, the church at that time began to recognize that the ministry of the church was a shared enterprise between clergy and congregation. Moreover, the posture of the church's relationship with its Open and Affirming status (and other progressive theological stances) began to change. We moved away from downplaying these beliefs and toward claiming them as a fundamental expression of our values and mission within the community. When the church set its focus on its values, and not its fear, attendance and membership started to grow. Those trends, in large part, are ongoing within the church. A new and younger generation of leaders have emerged from within the congregation.

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

In 2009 the pastor left after his contract hours were reduced.

**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

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

- a. COMMUNITY VISION
- b. MISSION InSite

### 4a. Community Vision

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For the past two decades, our church has been in a steady process of recovery following some difficult financial challenges elaborated elsewhere in this profile. In recent years, we have begun to take more seriously the prospect of restoring our congregation's participation in some of the missions of the larger U.C.C. This prospect appears closer at hand now than at any point in recent memory.

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.

- ☐ Accessible to All (A2A)
- ☒ Creation Justice
- ☐ Economic Justice
- ☒ Faithful and Welcoming
- ☒ God Is Still Speaking (GISS)
- ☒ Border and Immigrant Justice
- ☒ Inter-cultural/Multi-racial (I'M)
- ☐ Just Peace
- ☐ Global Mission Church
- ☒ Open and Affirming (ONA)
- ☐ WISE Congregation for Mental Health
- ☒ Other UCC designations: Our Whole Lives and Taking Flight
- ☒ Peace Jam Conference



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?

With leadership from our minister and church leaders, many of these statements could easily grow into central missions of our faith community. Although we have not formalized many of these commitments through the U.C.C., our congregants live out many of these commitments through the following mission activities:

- a. Preparing and serving a monthly dinner at the Christian Aid Center.
- b. Preparing and serving a weekly free soup luncheon.
- c. Hosting and staffing a winter warming shelter as needed.



d. Preparing and distributing Christmas baskets and baby layettes to the needy.

e. Providing financial and volunteer support to local charities like *Helpline, the Pantry Shelf, 12-Step programs including Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Al-Anon, and Alateen.*

f. Provide affirming outreach to LGBTQ+ populations.

Our community of faith has benefited tremendously from regular services, collaboration, and joint advocacy with our neighbors of faith. First Congregational Church of Walla Walla supports — and is supported by — many of the most active members of our local synagogue, Quaker meeting, sangha, mosque, Ba’hai community, and Adventist churches. In fact, several members of our community derive from these honored faith traditions. When our church draws upon its ‘pulpit supply’ needs during times of pastoral leave, we often select guest preachers from our commitment to ecumenical and interfaith values.

**Our mission statement reads:** *United in Spirit and inspired by God’s grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.*

The time, energy and expenditure of our faith community is aptly characterized in our mission. We spend the lion’s share of our focus gathering and worshiping together, but we’re also engaged in critical ministries and advocacy throughout our community by serving our neighbors. These services include hosting a weekly soup lunch, cooking monthly meals at the food pantry, hosting several different 12-step meetings, and initiating marches and vigils in response to the moral imperatives that emerge on a regular basis.

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?

Our out-going pastor was given a clear set of objectives to guide his time working with our congregation. Our pastoral advisory committee met with him periodically, and he was evaluated annually, along with the church leadership as a whole. From there, he was free to pick, choose and prioritize how he engaged our larger community on issues of social justice and ministry. This allowed for flexible responses on an issue-by-issue basis. This level of discretion seemed to work well for the pastor and parishioners alike.

#### 4b. Internal / Community Demographics

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Our congregation’s internal demographics are on par with the neighborhoods adjacent to our church. Walla Walla is a small city, and the church is located in the downtown area, near the public library and on the outskirts of Whitman College. Housing in neighborhoods adjacent to our church tends to be single family homes and some apartments/condos. Some of the housing nearby is primarily rented to students, some are vacation rentals, some are 55 and over community housing units, and some are second homes. Our congregation is composed of the majority of people who own their homes and are resourced.

Our congregation connects with many neighborhoods, among an economically diverse populace. With our soup lunch and our 12-Step groups, we serve people who are without permanent housing.

The demographics of the community are shaping ministry as we have seen an uptick in the number of congregants who identify as LGBTQ+. We would like to see more racial diversity in our congregation, as there are approximately 30% of the Walla Walla population who are Latino/Latina.

Community leaders tell us that our church is known for our weekly soup lunches, our community mindedness in hosting 12-Step groups, Our Whole Lives (OWL) taking flight trauma-informed sexual education program, our commitment to social justice by being the visible gathering place for peaceful marches, being open and affirming, and our many members who volunteer at area nonprofit organizations and work in the community.

New people who get involved say that they are drawn to our progressive theology, commitment to social justice, and open and affirming congregation. They say that they feel very welcomed by the congregation and that it is a very supportive and loving community who truly live our mission.

## **5. REFERENCES**

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### **Dr. Terry Koch**

Choir Director at Pioneer Methodist Church

[ploughman1946@gmail.com](mailto:ploughman1946@gmail.com)

### **Rev. Chuck Hindman**

Board member, Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless

[chuck.karen.hindman@gmail.com](mailto:chuck.karen.hindman@gmail.com)

### **Noah Leavitt**

Director of Student Engagement Center of Whitman College

[nsleavitt@hotmail.com](mailto:nsleavitt@hotmail.com)

### **Rev. Danielle Estelle Ramsey**

Associate pastor, Pioneer Methodist

[familypastor@pioneerww.org](mailto:familypastor@pioneerww.org)

### **Guillermo Corro**

Active member, Walla Walla Immigrant Rights Coalition

[gicorror@gmail.com](mailto:gicorror@gmail.com)

### **Dr. Richard Middleton-Kaplan**

Member, Congregation Beth Israel, Dean of Arts & Sciences, Walla Walla Community College

[richard.middletonkaplan@wwcc.edu](mailto:richard.middletonkaplan@wwcc.edu)

### **Rev. Juli Reinholz**

Local retired Methodist pastor

[jcreinholz@gmail.com](mailto:jcreinholz@gmail.com)

## 6. CLOSING THOUGHTS

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- a. CLOSING PRAYER
- b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT
- c. CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION VALIDATION

### 6a. CLOSING PRAYER

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We are diverse Christian believers  
empowered by love  
guided by the  
Eternal Spirit  
Earth-Maker  
Loving God  
Source of all that is

It is our mission to enable personal spiritual growth collective outreach and stewardship of God's creation

Life-Giver  
You  
reign  
in  
love

The way of Your Justice be followed by all peoples of the world

Pain-Bearer  
forgive us  
free us

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth

We are diverse Christian believers  
We are open and affirming  
We are an open and affirming church  
Because of who you are  
No matter where you are on life's journey  
you are welcome here  
Welcome!

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 a 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.

Prepared by the Pastoral Search Committee, appointed by Church Council, comprised of:  
Emily Asmus, Pat Carman, Annie Charnley Eveland, Adam Kirtley, Julie Jones, Jill Juers, Terry Rice, John Van Slyke

Signed:

Adam Kirtley and Annie Charnley Eveland, co-chairs of the Pastor Search Transition Team, April 15, 2022.

#### 6c. VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

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

Staff Comment:

Yes.

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

Staff Comment:

To the best of my knowledge, this information is accurate and true.

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

Staff Comment:

To the best of my knowledge, this information is accurate and true.

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature:   
Name / Title: Conference Minister  
Email: mike@pncucc.org  
Phone: 206-725-8383  
Date: 04/19/22

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*