

Search and Call Tools for Congregations

Advancing the Spirit's guidance into God's future

INTRODUCING THE NEW LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

Who
are
we

Who
is our
neighbor

Who is
God
calling us
to become

?

The new Local Church Profile is not just for congregations in search of a Pastor. *All* congregations are encouraged to engage in its process of discovery every 3-5 years. The UCC Local Church Profile reflects valuable data, assesses ministry, clarifies change, and helps advance the calling of the congregation. Not just to be completed by a search

MINISTERIAL EXCELLENCE,
SUPPORT & AUTHORIZATION
UNITED CHURCH
OF Christ



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

First Congregational United Church of Christ, Fargo
Fargo, North Dakota

Part Time Settled Pastor

Northern Plains Conference

VALIDATION DATE: 6.26.2025

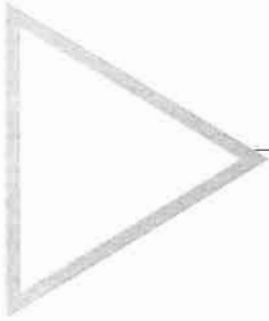
*“God is able to provide you with every blessing, so that
having all sufficiency in all things at all times,
you may abound in every good work.”
(2 Corinthians 9:8)*

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At First Congregational United Church of Christ in Fargo, we believe that ministry is a shared journey of faith, service, and love. Rooted in a legacy of progressive Christian witness and guided by a spirit of welcome, we are a congregation committed to nurturing spiritual growth, building community partnerships, and living out God's inclusive love. This profile reflects our story: who we are, where we've been, and where we sense God calling us next. We offer it with gratitude and hope as we seek a part-time settled pastor to walk with us into the future.

1. POSITION POSTING



LISTING INFORMATION

Church name: First Congregational United Church of Christ, Fargo

Street address: 1101 17th Ave S, Fargo, ND 58103

Supplemental web links: <https://www.facebook.com/firstuccfargo.org/>

Conference: Northern Plains Conference, United Church of Christ

Association: None- Conference acting as Association

UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person (Name, Title, Phone, Email):

Rev. Deborah Blood, Designated Conference Minister, 207-530-0429, djblood@npcucc.org

Summary Ministry Description:

First Congregational Church Fargo is seeking a settled part-time Pastor to partner with us as we build on our solid foundation as a progressive Christian community in Fargo, North Dakota. We are a congregation ready and eager to evolve as we honor our rich history while embracing the future of our ministry. Since the retirement of our long-tenured Pastor in 2022, we have been engaged in thoughtful discernment about who we are and who we are called to become. Caring for one another within our congregation and reaching out to our Fargo community are both central to our identity. We seek a Pastor who will offer leadership and encouragement to our volunteers as they sustain and grow ministries like our community garden, our partnership with a local interfaith nonprofit that provides community meals, and our supply and food drives supporting neighbors facing food insecurity and housing needs.

We understand the importance of shared leadership and we are ready to offer the collaboration and shared leadership needed to help our church thrive. We look forward to welcoming a Pastor who will join us as a partner on this journey, working together as a supportive team dedicated to our shared mission.

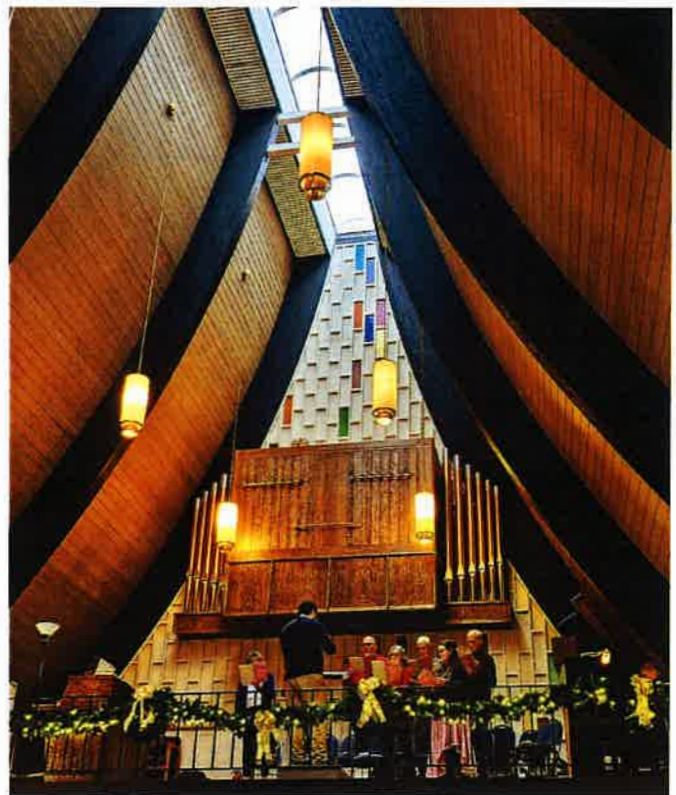
Photographs:



Members and Friends After Our January Congregational Meeting



Our Church and Community Garden



Our Choir Singing During Advent



Interactive Worship on Mother's Day



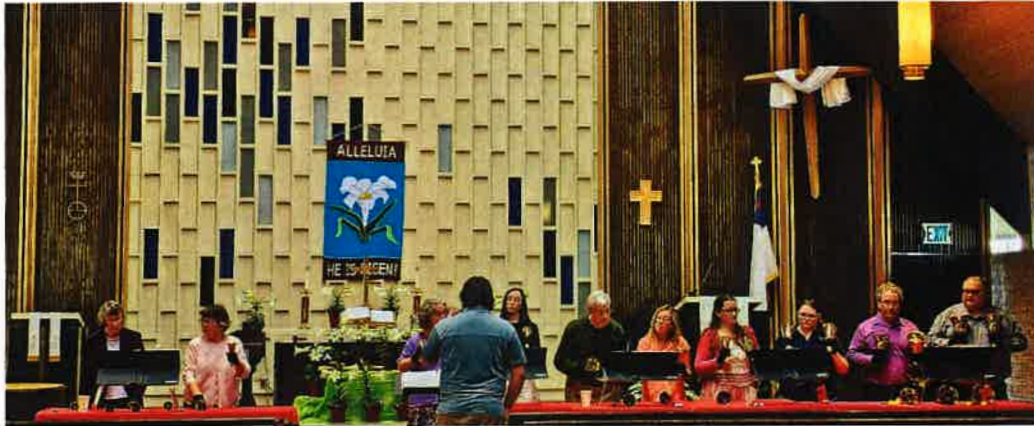
Palm Sunday Processional



Longest Night Service



Wednesday Lent Service,
"Prayers for Those who are Unhoused."



Easter Bells



A meal with our ministry partner, Emmanuel Nepali Church



Community Concert by our partners,
The Fargo-Moorhead Gay Men's Chorus



First Fargo's Pride Booth at FM Pride

What we value about living in our area:

Our church is located in an established neighborhood of Fargo, North Dakota, adjacent to I-94 and situated on one of the city's main thoroughfares, South University Drive. Fargo is the largest city in North Dakota, with a population of about 138,000. Together with our sister city, Moorhead, Minnesota, just across the Red River of the North, we form a vibrant and growing metro area of nearly 268,000 people. Fargo-Moorhead offers the best of both small-town hospitality and urban amenities. The region is known for its excellent healthcare systems, three thriving universities, strong public schools, and a diverse, growing job market. The cost of living remains affordable compared to many metropolitan areas, and the region boasts low crime rates, easy commutes, and abundant parks and trails for outdoor enthusiasts.

Fargo-Moorhead is also rich in cultural and recreational opportunities, including a lively arts scene, music and film festivals, theaters, museums, and a variety of dining experiences from local eateries to international cuisine. The area experiences all four seasons, with opportunities for everything from kayaking and hiking in the summer to cross-country skiing and ice skating in the winter. First Congregational Church Fargo values the diversity, creativity, and welcoming spirit of the Fargo-Moorhead community. We are committed to finding meaningful ways to serve our neighbors as we engage with both the city's deep roots and its promising future.

Current size of membership:

Our rostered membership of 135 is a diverse group that includes active members and those who wish to remain connected to our church but do not regularly attend. Our average attendance is around thirty-five, which includes not only members but friends of our church. During the summer months, many of our congregants spend time away in the nearby lake country, but we always have a core group of regular attendees, making everyone feel welcomed and valued.

Languages used in ministry: We only use English in our ministry at this time.

Position Title: Settled Part-Time Pastor, Half Time

Compensation Level: ½ Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines?

The total support package is based on Conference Guidelines and is negotiable.

SCOPE OF WORK

The part-time Pastor will serve as a spiritual leader for First Congregational Church, preaching and leading worship two to three Sundays each month, including Christmas Eve and Easter (unless otherwise arranged). They will also provide leadership or collaborate with others to offer worship during seasonal mid-week services in Advent and Lent. The Pastor will partner with pulpit supply clergy and lay leaders to ensure a rich and meaningful worship life.

A central part of this role will be building relationships with members, friends, and the wider community, offering Pastoral care and support. The Pastor will take the lead in developing a lay-led Pastoral visitation program and will work closely with key stakeholders to shape faith formation opportunities for adults, youth, and children. The Pastor will provide guidance to volunteers who lead our outreach efforts, including the community garden, community meals, and donation drives. Additionally, the Pastor will oversee church staff, collaborate with the Moderator and Church Board, and attend monthly board meetings. As part of their ministry, the Pastor will nurture connections with the wider UCC through participation in conference and synod gatherings and will seek to strengthen relationships within the Fargo-Moorhead community, expanding the church's ministry to vulnerable populations.

Core Competencies:

We are seeking a Pastor who is passionate about serving Christ in our modern world by meeting people where they are, who can build rapport and relationships with people of all ages and walks of life, and who will actively participate in the work of the church in an organized and professional manner.

COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

Salary Basis:

Compensation Package Summary — Half-Time Pastor

We are offering an annual salary in the range of is \$38,000 – \$42,000, commensurate with experience. Additionally, we will contribute to our pastor's compensation in the following ways:

- Pension contribution: \$5,241
- Disability and life insurance: \$600
- Social Security offset: up to \$2,864 (based on final salary)

This package reflects our commitment to supporting our Pastor's well-being and financial security, in alignment with denominational guidelines.

What is the expected living situation for your next minister?

We anticipate that our Pastor will secure their own housing within the Fargo-Moorhead area, and we are committed to offering support and guidance as they become settled in our community.

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

While we would prefer to call a Pastor who lives within an hour of Fargo to support community connection and accessibility, we are open to discussing other living or commuting arrangements as needed. We value flexibility and are committed to collaborating with our next minister to find an arrangement that supports both their well-being and our shared ministry.

Peer and professional support available for ministers in your association/conference:

We are in an exciting and growth-filled time in the Northern Plains Conference. Our Conference's Committee on Ministry is actively developing training courses for clergy, licensed Pastors, members in discernment, and lay worship leaders, while reimagining how we support clergy and congregations across our region. Recently, our Committee on Ministry hosted a workshop in Bismarck, ND that brought together several local churches to help them build lay-led Pastoral visitation programs, drawing on the UCC's *Called to Care* and Wellness resources. In the Fargo area, our Pastor will benefit from the collegial support of several ordained clergy who are deeply engaged in the life of the church and community.

If applicable, describe how your church will adopt part-time adjustments in the Pastoral schedule to support a minister's bi-vocational employment:

First Congregational Fargo has grown through the experience of working with a part-time interim Pastor from May 2023-May 2024. This time has helped us learn to set thoughtful priorities for our Pastor's time, engage volunteers to fill gaps, and adjust our expectations in healthy and realistic ways. One of our greatest strengths as a church is our dedicated core of lay leaders, who offer leadership and support across many areas of church life. We've also built strong connections with ordained clergy and seminary students in our community, creating a reliable rotation for pulpit supply. We are seeking a Pastor who will empower, encourage, and collaborate with our volunteers and guest Pastors, and who will help champion both our current ministries and future possibilities.

WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?

Ministry Goals for Our New Pastor:

At First Congregational Fargo, we believe ministry is a shared endeavor. We are eager to partner with our next Pastor to nurture our faith community and extend our outreach. Our key ministry goals include:

1. **Enriching our worship life.** Together, we hope to continue developing meaningful worship experiences and explore new ways for our congregation and community to gather in praise. We will support our Pastor by providing pulpit supply for 1–2 Sundays each month, serving as worship leaders, ushers, and greeters, and assisting with planning as desired.
2. **Deepening community connections.** We want to strengthen relationships through existing programs, such as our community garden, and cultivate new partnerships that allow us to serve our neighbors in Fargo and beyond. We are committed to collaborating with our Pastor on current initiatives and volunteering in new efforts that respond to community needs.
3. **Building a Pastoral visitation program.** We aim to develop a caring visitation ministry that reaches members who are homebound, facing health or personal challenges, or simply in need of extra support. We will partner with our Pastor by recruiting and training volunteers to extend care alongside them.
4. **Expanding faith formation for all ages.** We envision vibrant opportunities for spiritual growth for children, youth, and adults. We will collaborate with our Pastor by helping plan programs, recruiting volunteers, and actively participating in faith formation activities.

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

We do not have any specific language requirements for our next Pastor. However, we are seeking a minister who demonstrates an elevated level of cultural competence and a genuine commitment to welcome and affirm all people. Our congregation values inclusivity as central to our sense of calling. We seek a Pastor who can engage with people of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds; who is sensitive to differences in spirituality and religion; and who embraces individuals of all gender identities, sexual orientations, marital statuses, abilities, ages, and economic circumstances. This capacity for hospitality and openness reflects our belief that God's love knows no boundaries, and it is at the heart of how we strive to live out our faith together.

Engaging the Marks

Four areas of excellence from *The Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry* that our next minister will display to further equip the congregation's ministry in these areas.

Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions:

We seek a Pastor who loves to learn and is deeply committed to helping our congregation grow in understanding our faith and our calling in the world. We hope to find someone who will engage in effective preaching and worship, lead and empower others to lead faith formation across generations, and "*hold the holy with integrity*" in our sacraments and faith life.

Caring For All Creation:

Our next Pastor will be someone who genuinely cares for God's creation, including our congregants, our community, and the earth itself. Our community garden serves as a visible expression of our church's theology. Just as our members and neighbors tend the soil and nurture growth, we seek to be a congregation that tends to our shared place in the Fargo community, fostering diversity, unity, and life-giving connections.

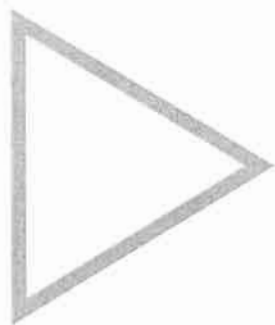
Building Transformational Leadership Skills:

We know our church cannot depend on our Pastor to do everything or be everywhere! As we call a part-time Pastor, we are committed to continue our process of becoming a congregation that actively participates in all aspects of our shared ministry. We seek a leader who will empower us to be "*faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission, and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit.*" We believe the right candidate will bring strengths in strategic planning, fundraising, and leadership development.

Nurturing UCC Identity:

We seek a Pastor who is rooted in their Christian identity and sense of call and who communicates a passion for the "*oneness of the Body of Christ.*" We live into God's extravagant welcome in ways that other churches in our area may not, due to their differing theological identities. We are proud to be part of the United Church of Christ and desire a Pastor who understands and values our UCC history, polity, and witness.

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?

We believe God is calling us to become a congregation that lives even more fully into our identity as an open, inclusive, and welcoming faith community. We are being led to deepen our relationships with God, with one another, with churches in our community and in our Conference, and with our neighbors near and far. God is calling us to nurture spiritual growth across generations, to stand boldly for justice and compassion, and to build partnerships that enrich lives. We sense God’s invitation to become a resilient and adaptable community of faith, one that honors our traditions while embracing new ways of being church for today and tomorrow.

We treasure the relationships we have built with community partners who share our church home. Currently, we are blessed to host Emmanuel Nepali Church, the Fargo-Moorhead Gay Men’s Chorus, Heather and Thistle Pipe and Drums, the F-M Big Book Club, and our UCC Northern Plains Conference. Inspired by this vibrant sense of community, we continue to seek new partnerships and creative ways to be good neighbors, enriching the lives of those in our neighborhood, our city, and beyond.

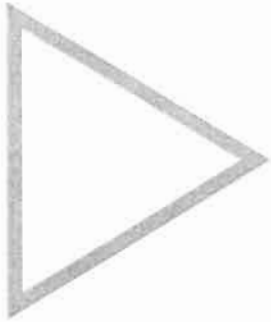
Describe how God is calling you to reach out to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of your community and congregation.

During the past two years, we have experienced both the challenge and the opportunity of continuing our ministry without a settled Pastor. In this time, we have felt God calling us to step up and to strengthen connections with area clergy and ministry students. We have explored new ways to deepen our engagement with the community, for example by adding supply drives for local nonprofits and welcoming more neighbors into our community garden. This season has made us stronger as a congregation. We have become more attentive listeners and more creative strategizers, learning to maximize our resources without giving in to an attitude of scarcity.

One powerful example of how we have responded to emerging challenges and opportunities, particularly around the growing need for mental health care and awareness, is our Mental Health Awareness Sunday, which we observed last summer. While our church has long advocated for mental health, this was our first time addressing the issue within a worship service. Guided by UCC WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged) resources, our worship planners created a service centered on mental health, and we invited a parish nurse from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to present the "Talk Saves Lives" program. This was one of our most well-attended Sundays of the summer. The presentation deeply touched our congregation, sparking meaningful conversations that continued for over an hour after worship as people shared their firsthand experiences with mental health and suicide.

As an outgrowth of that day, we feel a renewed sense of call to explore becoming a UCC WISE Congregation for Mental Health. We believe God is calling us to continue responding to the challenges and opportunities of our time with compassion, courage, and a deep commitment to listening, learning, and acting together in faith.

3. WHO ARE WE NOW?



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

CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS

Describe your congregation’s life of faith.

First Congregational UCC, Fargo is a faith community committed to warmly welcoming all people and actively engaging with our wider community. We live into our core value of inclusion, affirming: “No matter where you are on life’s journey, regardless of your race, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, or creed, you are welcome in our church!”

Our worship liturgy reflects our deep belief in God’s unlimited, boundless love for all creation. We strive to communicate that each of us belongs to God’s Beloved Community, and that nothing we do can separate us from that love. We experience the movement of the Spirit in many ways: in the music we make and share, in quiet moments of reflection, in the cries and laughter of children, in the care extended when someone is hurting, and in the spirited conversations at board and congregational meetings. We experience the Spirit most profoundly in the ways we lift one another in prayer, care tenderly for our children and elders, and give of our financial and personal resources with generosity and joy.

As part of our ongoing commitment to listen deeply and respond faithfully, our Search and Call Committee conducted a congregational survey. The results affirmed what grounds our life of faith: Sunday morning worship, our community garden, and outreach to the Fargo-Moorhead area. As one can note throughout this profile, these priorities come to life as our members and friends dedicate their time, energy, and care to our congregation.

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

As highlighted throughout this profile, one of our greatest strengths is our core of dedicated and independent volunteers. Their leadership, generosity, and resilience have been the backbone of our church, particularly in the time since our long-tenured Pastor retired. A second key strength is our warm and inclusive spirit. We take pride in offering an open, affirming welcome to all who

attend or visit, embracing people of diverse backgrounds and life experiences. Third, we are blessed with a vibrant music ministry which includes staff musicians, our organist and choir director, a choir that sings regularly during the fall and spring, and our bell choir, which reunited for an Easter performance this spring. Together, these strengths help sustain our faith community and guide us as we move into the future.

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

We gather for worship on Sunday mornings at 10:30 a.m., creating a space where all are invited to encounter the sacred together. Our typical service blends elements from the UCC's *Worship Ways* resources, hymns, special music from our wonderful choir or guest musicians, scripture, sermon, and prayer. Because we welcome a variety of ministers to our pulpit, our congregation is open to different preaching styles, ranging from sermons to interactive, discussion-based reflections and activity-centered messages.

Worship usually takes place in our beautiful sanctuary, though we occasionally gather in our fellowship hall for a more informal setting. At the heart of all our worship is a shared commitment to listen for the *still-speaking Word of God*. We believe God is present with us and among us, offering love, healing, and hope, and leading us into lives of faith and service.

We celebrate Communion monthly, drawing on a variety of liturgies for our prayers and words of institution. For baptism and confirmation, we use the UCC *Book of Worship* as a primary resource, while also adapting and personalizing the liturgy so that it speaks meaningfully to those gathered for the occasion.

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

At present, we offer an educational time for children during our Sunday morning worship service. Children join the congregation for the first part of worship, then go downstairs to our education rooms with caring adults. Both adults and high school-aged youth help lead these sessions, offering fun, age-appropriate learning activities that nurture our children's faith.

Our adult faith formation program meets weekly and is led by a retired minister. Open to all, this group creates space for spirited, thoughtful discussion and shared reflection. The group strives to be inclusive, open and respectful of diverse views. Participants value how the group invites them to broaden their understanding of Christianity and deepen their awareness of God's presence in their lives. Our leader of this group, a retired clergy member, considers this group to be Adult Re-Affirmation of Faith, standing in contrast to the area's other, more traditional options.

Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

Our congregation has grown into a vibrant, volunteer-driven community. Our ministry and mission are shaped by the energy, creativity, and passion of our members and clergy connections. We have folks who take the lead in designing worship plans and creating bulletins, nurturing our community garden, organizing food drives for emergency food pantries, coordinating meals for the interfaith nonprofit Churches United, and so much more. Our members connect with the wider church by implementing our 5 for 5 Offerings, and organizing local and regional gatherings, such as our summer picnic for the Northern Plains Conference.

A powerful example of how our church pulls together in a time of crisis was seen in our response to major roof damage after a series of Fargo snowstorms. When leaks developed in our A-frame roof, our Moderator immediately mobilized the Church Board. A board member organized a cleanup crew, while the Board secured a roofing company to assess the damage and provide an estimate. The Moderator informed the congregation of the situation and requested a congregational vote to fund the repairs. Working together, the Board treasurer and a volunteer who assists with memorial funds identified initial funding sources, and the Board launched a fundraising effort to cover the remaining costs. The swift, collaborative response to this unexpected challenge reflects the dedication and resilience that define our life together.

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?

Our Search and Call Committee will provide Church By-Laws and minutes from the Church Board and Congregational meetings. Position descriptions for Board Members and staff and recent annual reports are also available.

11-YEAR REPORT

A Separate Document is available upon request.

CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	40	✓
Number of active non-members:	7	✓
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	47	✓

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%	✓
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	5%	✓
Less than 5 years:	20%	✓

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>
8	1		4	2	4	5	14	9	✓

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	1	✓
Households with minors:	15	✓
Single adults age 35-65:	4	✓
Joint households with no minors:	50	✓
Single adults over 65:	30	✓

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	30	✓
College:	53	✓
Graduate School:	15	✓
Specialty Training:	2	✓

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	25	✓
Adults who are retired:	65	✓
Adults who are not fully employed:	10	✓

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

Our members and friends represent a wide range of occupations, reflecting the rich diversity of our community. We have members who work in public schools and higher education, at Sanford and Essentia hospitals, at RDO (John Deere and Vermeer Equipment), in local restaurants, and in privately owned businesses. Our congregation also includes retired medical providers, nurses, educators, and professionals who continue to share their gifts with the wider community. Many of our retired members are active volunteers, giving their time and talents to nonprofits such as Churches United, local food banks, and senior living communities. Together, we bring a variety of skills, experiences, and passions to our shared ministry and mission.

Describe the mix of ethnic heritages in your congregation, and the overall racial make-up.

Our congregation is primarily Euro-American, with members and friends who also identify as Filipino, African, and Latinx. We value the diversity present among us and seek to continue growing as a community that reflects the inclusive love of God.

Has your congregation recently had a conversation about welcoming diversity, or do you plan to hold one in the near future (perhaps using, for example, the Welcoming Diversity Inventory)?

Other than our Mental Health Sunday, referenced earlier in the portfolio, in recent years we have not had a formal conversation or activity specifically focused on welcoming diversity, such as the Welcoming Diversity Inventory. However, the values of inclusion and hospitality are woven into our worship liturgy, preaching, and congregational life. We recognize the importance of intentional reflection on this topic and are open to exploring opportunities for deeper conversations about how we can more fully live out our call to welcome all.

PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING

Ways of Gathering	Estimated number of people involved in attendance	Who plans each of the gatherings listed? <i>(list any and all worship planners, such as various lay leaders, Pastors, musicians, other staff)</i>
Adult Groups or Classes	5	Don McCullagh and lay volunteers
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>	2	Shared by clergy partners
Children's Groups or Classes	4	Volunteers
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	45/45	Shared by clergy partners
Church-wide Meals	2	Harvest Dinner (Garden Group) and Veteran's Day Celebration (led by a volunteer)
Choirs and Music Groups	Choir, 8-10 Handbells 10	Choir director Jared Hoeft
Church-based Bible Study	Not currently offered	
Communion <i>(served how often?)</i>	Once a month	Shared by clergy partners
Community Meals	5	Volunteer
Confirmation <i>(number confirmed last year)</i>	2023, 1 confirmed	Joint classes with Moorhead UCC
Drama or Dance Program	n/a	

Funerals (<i>number last year</i>)	2	Shared by clergy partners
Intergenerational Groups	n/a	
Outdoor Worship	1	July 20,2025: Volunteer clergy and musicians.
Prayer or Meditation Groups	Not offered at this time.	
Public Advocacy Work	5-10	Shared by clergy partners and volunteers
Retreats	Not offered at this time.	
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community	n/a	
Weddings (<i>number last year</i>)	1	Shared by clergy partners
Worship (time slot: 10:30)	Avg, 35	
Young Adult Groups or Classes	n/a	
Youth Groups or Classes	Sunday School time during worship.	
Other: Community Garden	15-20	Lay Volunteers
Children/Youth Activity	15 (combined youth and their adults)	"Summer Funday" at local pizza parlor with arcade.

Additional comments:

Our church has a history of holding Midweek services during Advent and Lent. These services had an average attendance of 10-15. For the past two years, we have had a clergy partner lead a "Longest Night/Blue Christmas" service in December.

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)
Rev. Gina Harvey	Yes	Director of Spiritual Care and CPE for Sanford Health, Fargo	Volunteer	N
Rev. Don McCullagh	No	Retired	Volunteer	Y
Rev. Sharon Langfeldt	No	Parish ministry, UMC	Volunteer	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:

Rev. Don McCullagh, a member of our congregation, leads our adult faith formation groups and other activities that support the spiritual growth of our community. While Don has not served as a settled Pastor of our congregation, he is seen as one of the Pastors who helps provide care and nurture within our church family.

Rev. Sharon Langfeldt served as our interim pastor from May 2023 to May 2024. After completing her ministry with us, she stepped back for a season to honor healthy boundaries and support the congregation's transition. In 2025, Sharon returned as a volunteer, assisting with preaching and contributing to our digital newsletter. She is married to Rev. Gina Harvey, a UCC clergy member in covenant with our congregation. Gina leads our worship planning and coordinates the preaching schedule, helping to ensure vibrant, thoughtful, and consistent worship leadership.

Current staff:

NOTE: Church Board is currently serving 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
Mariann Astrup	Organist	Part time	Church Board	10 years
Jared Hoeft	Choir Director	Part time	Church Board	11 years
Breann Lambert	Custodian	Part Time	Church Board	3 years

REFLECTION

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

Our average attendance at our 10:30 a.m. Sunday worship service is currently around thirty-five members and friends each week. Most of our members and friends attend worship one to two times per month, while some engage more deeply through other aspects of our ministry. For example, some individuals are active in groups such as our Community Garden, even if they do not attend Sunday services regularly. A defining feature of our church life is that our ministry and mission are organized and conducted by many congregants and friends of our church. We have worked intentionally to build strong relationships with clergy partners, both locally and beyond, who contribute to the life of our church by preaching, leading worship, and presiding at baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Our programs are fueled by the passion and commitment of participants who value and invest in the activities and ministries they care about most.

CHURCH FINANCES

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

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$ 131,058
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	\$
Grants	\$ 0
Rentals of Church Building	\$ 26,326
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$ 0
Support from Related Organizations (<i>e.g. Women's Group</i>)	\$ 0
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$ 0
Other (specify):	\$ n/a
Other (specify):	\$ n/a
TOTAL	\$ 157,384

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year): \$73,720

Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support. What is the percentage? 21%

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)

We are a 5x5 church and include all of the offerings below in the church year. We have records for our OCWN support, \$1398.59 and our Christmas Fund, \$255. Going forward, we intend to record the amounts given for all of our special offerings.

- ✓ 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%)

OCWM is included in our budget and paid annually.

What is the church's current indebtedness? \$33, 330

Total amount of loan debt: \$ \$33, 330

Reason for debt: Roof Repair

Are capital and other payments current? Yes.

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 building projects are currently underway. The roof was repaired this spring, and we secured a loan to secure the amount left unpaid after using designated funds from memorials and our fundraiser.

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

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
2023-2024	Repair A-Frame roof	\$70K	\$70K	Roof repairs exceeded the initial estimate. We secured a loan to cover the overage.

If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe:

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
Anticipated 2027	Repair flat roof	\$50K	\$	Not started.

Describe the prominent mission component(s) involved in the most recent (or current) capital campaign. We accomplished our fundraising by requesting additional pledges from the congregation and utilizing appropriate memorial funds.

Does your church have an endowment? No. We have two memorial accounts with restricted funds.

Other Assets

Reserves (savings): \$65,000

Investments (other than endowment): \$ 0

Does your church have a parsonage? No

Describe all the buildings owned by the church:

The church owns the main building and parking lots as well as a small shed at the rear of the church.

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

None.

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs? (*worship space, pulpit, fellowship space, facilities, etc.*)

The ground level of the sanctuary, the fellowship hall, restrooms, central office space, ground level storage room, and kitchen are accessible. The basement and balcony of the sanctuary are not accessible.

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

In recent history the biggest budget changes were when our fulltime Pastor retired and when we needed a new roof for the A-Frame portion of the church. In both cases, the Church Board took the lead in making budget changes. Our budget process is initiated by the Board Treasurer or other Church Board member who works with volunteers and other Board members to create a budget. The Church Board approves the Budget and then it is presented at the January Congregational Meeting. The congregation votes on the budget during the meeting. When needed, the congregation will vote on any significant budget changes. For example, a congregational vote was taken to increase the budget for roof repairs. A congregational vote was also taken to approve the loan application for the overage of the cost of the roof.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

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.

Several key events have shaped the identity of First Congregational UCC, Fargo. One of the most significant in the past decade was the retirement of our longtime Pastor in 2022, which called us to step into new forms of leadership. We relied on collaboration from lay leaders and community clergy and developed a volunteer-driven ministry as we navigated this time of transition. Another major event was the addition of an online worship component in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which expanded our reach and allowed us to stay connected as a faith community during a challenging time. We are continuing to improve our online presence, and our goal is to stream worship each Sunday. Most recently, the completion of our new roof in 2024 stands as a symbol of our congregation's resilience and dedication. We worked hard together to raise funds, secured a loan to cover remaining costs, and demonstrated our shared commitment to maintaining our church home for future generations. This spring and summer, we have had a targeted fundraiser which has helped us pay down the principle of the loan. These events reflect our congregation's spirit of adaptability, generosity, and care for one another and our community.

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

The retirement of our longtime Pastor marked a significant change for our congregation, one that brought a sense of loss and grief as we said goodbye not only to him but also to his wife, who had been an integral part of our church family. This transition required us to redefine our identity as a congregation and required patience, thoughtful reflection, and time. About a year after his retirement, we called Rev. Sharon Langfeldt as our intentional interim Pastor for a one-year term. Her presence was a guiding light in our healing process, offering the support and wisdom we needed to move forward. When her term concluded, we entered our Search and Call process feeling stronger, more prepared, and hopeful for the future.

As highlighted throughout this profile, we are now a lay-led church who serve alongside a few paid staff (music and custodial). This volunteer-led model brings both challenges and rewards. We have learned to thoughtfully evaluate the value of each program and understand that promising ideas alone are not enough! Each initiative we embrace requires committed leadership to bring it to life. One of the most significant shifts in our life together over the past decade has been developing this core group of members and friends who are independent, focused, and centered on our shared mission.

Describe your congregation's values and practices when it comes to conflict.

We do not have a formal policy or process for handling conflict, but we value collaborative decision-making and strive to include many voices in our conversations. We recognize that, like many communities in the Midwest, our congregation tends toward a conflict-avoidant culture. At the same time, we understand that practicing authenticity in our relationships is essential to fulfilling our mission. When disagreements arise, we do our best to engage one another directly, approaching each situation with open minds and a commitment to seeking understanding. We acknowledge that members of our congregation have different perspectives, capacities, and preferences when it comes to communication and conflict resolution. In light of this diversity, we aim to meet one another with love and gentleness, offering the space and time needed to move toward healing and resolution.

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

Staff member's name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Rev. Sharon Langfeldt Interim Pastor, part-time	1	No
Rev. Dr. Kevin Cassidy-Maloney Settled Pastor, full-time	16	Yes
Rev. Dr. William Ziegler	8	Yes
Rev. Dr. Nelson Stone	15	Yes

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

We have learned that having long-tenured Pastors can be both a great blessing and a source of challenges for a congregation. Our longtime Pastor offered stability, deep relationships, and consistent leadership that supported our church's growth and vitality for many years. However, over time, we came to rely heavily on him to carry much of the work of the church, from spiritual leadership to administrative tasks and program oversight. When he retired, we were faced not only with a sense of loss but also with the need to rediscover our own capacity for leadership and shared ministry.

This period without a settled Pastor has taught us to become more self-sufficient, creative, collaborative, and resilient. At times it was tempting to slide into an attitude of scarcity, but we are learning to embrace uncertainty with more faith and hope than we have had before. We have learned to identify and nurture the gifts within our congregation. Building partnerships with clergy and lay leaders who support our ministry in meaningful ways has been essential to our operation and identity.

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

NO

Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?

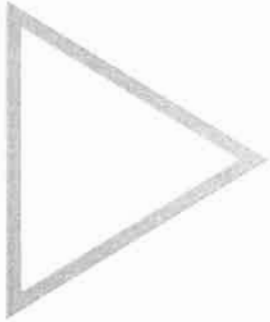
Unsure

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

NO

Our church does not have many of its historical records, but we are aware of times in the past when tensions arose between former Pastors and the congregation. One such instance involved navigating a Pastor's dual role as both our full-time minister and a military chaplain. Another was related to conversations about officially becoming an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation. While these experiences challenged us to reflect deeply on our values, relationships, and shared mission, we can still feel their effects at times today. In particular, there remains some voiced resistance to re-engaging the ONA covenant process. As a whole, our congregation is welcoming and affirming. We have members who identify as queer/LGBTQIA+, and we often invite queer Pastors to our pulpit, including our recent interim Pastor. Many in our community see inclusivity as central to who we are. However, some long-tenured members continue to carry the memory of how a previous attempt at becoming an ONA church led to division and the departure of some members, and this history shapes how we move forward in these conversations.

4. WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?



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

COMMUNITY VISION

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

Our congregation is committed to outreach and partnership in the Fargo community. We hold ongoing food and supply drives to support local agencies serving neighbors who face food insecurity and homelessness. We have a long-standing relationship with New Life Center, a shelter for individuals without permanent housing, and have recently begun partnering with Fargo’s Downtown Engagement Center, part of the city’s Harm Reduction program. One of our members organizes our church’s participation with Churches United for the Homeless, a nonprofit organization that provides food distribution and community meals. We are proud to be a 5-for-5 church, actively supporting the UCC’s special offerings that further mission and justice work beyond our local community.

Our reach into the community extends through our Community Garden. Church members, friends, and neighbors work together to tend this large garden adjacent to our building. In 2024, the garden produced 3,600 pounds of fresh produce, which was donated to local agencies — and in the process, the garden helped foster new relationships with people who live in our neighborhood.

We also support our community by providing affordable space to a variety of partners who use our building for their ministries and activities. While this rental income helps sustain our church financially, we intentionally keep rates well below market value as part of our commitment to supporting others. Current partners include Emmanuel Nepali Church, the Fargo-Moorhead Gay Men’s Chorus, Fargo-Moorhead AA, Heather and Thistle Pipe and Drums, and our UCC Northern Plains Conference.

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

In the past year, our church has actively participated in the life of the wider church through several conference-wide listening sessions and by sending members to the Northern Plains Conference's annual meeting. We value our supportive relationship with our Conference Minister, Rev. Deborah Blood, who visits our church regularly and has provided thoughtful guidance during our Search and Call process. Additionally, Gina Harvey, UCC clergy in covenant with our congregation, serves on the Conference's Committee on Ministry, further strengthening our ties to the work and mission of the Northern Plains Conference.

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.) Check any statements below that apply to your UCC faith community.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible to All (A2A) | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Peace |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creation Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Global Mission Church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Justice | * Open and Affirming (ONA) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faithful and Welcoming | * WISE Congregation for Mental Health |
| <input 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) | X None <i>None completed</i> |

*Discussion in progress about these two Covenants.

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?

First Congregational UCC, Fargo lives into a spirit of welcome and affirmation, and we are in ongoing conversation about how best to reflect that in our covenants. While some in our congregation are eager to begin the process of officially becoming an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation, others have concerns shaped by our history and past experiences. We are committed to listening carefully to one another as we discern the path forward. There is strong support within our community for pursuing a WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged) covenant for mental health, and we hope to move forward with that process in 2026.

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

Our congregation actively participates with Churches United for the Homeless, supporting their work through food preparation, donations, and community meals. We partner with our sister church in Moorhead for shared activities and educational opportunities, strengthening relationships across our communities. This past spring, we joined other faith communities in an interfaith Good Friday service, reflecting our commitment to shared witness and unity. We are excited that several of our members are chairing and participating in the FM Pride Interfaith Celebration service as part of FM Pride in August 2025. This participation is a meaningful expression of our dedication to inclusion and justice and speaks volumes to our local community! We are also developing a stronger relationship with Emmanuel Nepali Church, one of our building partners, as we seek new ways to support one another in ministry.

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 future Pastor will take the lead in planning and leading worship services, supporting volunteer-led projects, nurturing the faith life of the congregation, and offering guidance as we continue to live into our mission and vision. This person will have strong organizational skills and initiative as they designed their weekly and monthly schedule to prioritize tasks thoughtfully to balance their time in a way that reflects the church's mission and current needs. Our congregation is dedicated to supporting a Pastor's flexible schedule to ensure work-life balance and role clarity. We are committed to proactive communication and helping our Pastor maintain healthy boundaries as we work together on our shared ministry goals. Collaboration with the Church Board is essential, and we expect the Pastor to attend Board meetings, meet regularly with the Moderator, and keep both the Board and the congregation informed about their ministry within the church and in the wider community. We understand that community ministry and involvement in the wider church are important parts of Pastoral leadership, and we are committed to supporting our Pastor as they balance these responsibilities within the scope of their role. This support may include funds for attending meetings and events and providing time off from preaching as needed.

MISSION InSite

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

Fargo has experienced significant demographic changes over the past few decades, becoming both larger and more diverse. As of July 2023, Fargo's population was estimated at 133,188, an increase of nearly 6% since the 2020 census. This steady growth reflects not only rising population numbers but also greater cultural, racial, and religious diversity.

While Fargo remains a predominantly White city (about 81% non-Hispanic White), it has a long history of welcoming immigrants and refugees, shaping its economic, cultural, and spiritual landscape. Today, the city is home to vibrant communities of immigrants and refugees from Somalia, Sudan, Nepal, Vietnam, Bhutan, and other nations, with over 7% of residents foreign-born. More than 10% of Fargo's population identifies as Muslim, and Fargo also has a significant Native American and Indigenous population whose presence and contributions are vital to the region's identity. Fargo's Black/African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and multiracial populations continue to grow as well, reflecting a broader trend of increasing diversity.

Current data trends point to continued growth in both population and diversity, presenting our congregation with meaningful opportunities for outreach, relationship-building, and service. We see this as a call to extend Christ's welcome to newcomers, to support those who have immigrated to Fargo from around the world, and to stand in solidarity with Indigenous neighbors who continue to experience the lasting effects of displacement and historical trauma.

Our church building is situated at a visible and dynamic corner in Fargo, not far from the downtown business district, with new shopping and housing developments along University Avenue, and a residential neighborhood full of families. This unique location offers us abundant opportunities to connect with our neighbors and make a difference as we seek to live out our mission of inclusion, compassion, and service.

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?

Our congregation's internal demographics do not fully reflect the diversity of the neighborhoods we serve. We are a predominantly White congregation, with a membership that tends to be older. In contrast, the neighborhood closest to our church is home to many families with children and represents greater racial, cultural, and economic diversity than is present within our congregation. This dynamic is not unique to our church; it is similar to what we see in many of the nearby Lutheran churches as well. We recognize this contrast as both a challenge and an opportunity that invites us to continue exploring how we can build meaningful relationships with our neighbors and more fully reflect the diversity of the community around us.

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

The changing demographics of Fargo, particularly the increasing number of people experiencing homelessness and food insecurity, are motivating our congregation to deepen our commitment to serving our most vulnerable neighbors. This is reflected in our ongoing partnerships with local agencies, food and supply drives, and community meal initiatives. We also recognize that the families with children living in our neighborhood may benefit from the sense of welcome and community our church offers. However, we are aware that we do not provide the same level of robust children's and youth programming as some of the larger Lutheran and nondenominational churches in our area. These realities challenge us to reflect on how we can continue to respond faithfully to the needs around us and explore creative ways to extend Christ's welcome to those in our community.

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

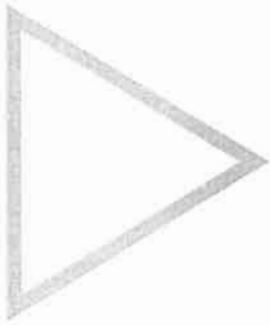
When we speak with community leaders, we hear that our church is known as a welcoming and affirming place for all, especially for LGBTQ+ individuals and families. We are recognized as a small, progressive congregation in a region that tends to be more conservative, as a church that offers spiritual community and belonging to those who may not have a church to call home.

We are known for our hospitality that extends beyond Sunday worship. For example, when a local family experienced the unexpected death of a loved one, our member in covenant, Rev. Gina Harvey, collaborated closely with them to provide spiritual care. We opened our doors to their families and friends, creating a space for grieving, remembering, and healing.

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

Many of our new members and friends say that what drew them in was the invitation to get involved and the openness of our community to new energy and ideas. Our congregation is intentional about "making space" for newcomers and helping people find ways to contribute that feel meaningful to them. A wonderful example of this is our community garden. We have welcomed many new gardeners to the project, not only friends of members but also neighbors who noticed the garden as they passed by and felt inspired to join in. New people often share that they appreciate being invited to participate in hands-on ministries where they can build relationships and make a tangible difference.

5. REFERENCES



REFERENCE 1

Rev. Dr. Steve Giddens, Assistant College Lecturer in the School of Education and Counseling, Levin College of Public Affairs and Education, Cleveland State University.

Prior to moving to Cleveland in June, 2025, Rev. Dr. Giddens was a clergy volunteer at First Fargo, preaching regularly and assisting with Pastoral needs.

Phone: 802-673-2717

Email: Steve@revgiddens.com

REFERENCE 2

Rev. Paul Peterson, Chaplain, CHI St. Francis in Breckenridge, MN.

Rev. Peterson is part of the preaching clergy rotation for First Fargo, regularly preaching twice a month.

Phone: 320-212-9476

Email: badlandspaul@gmail.com

REFERENCE 3

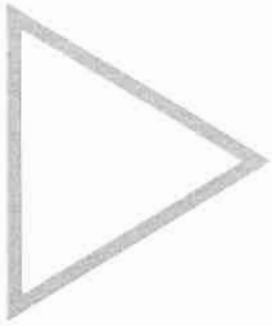
Rev. Michelle Webber, Pastor, First Congregational United Church of Christ Moorhead.

Rev. Webber is the Pastor of our sister congregation in Moorhead. She leads our combined confirmation program.

Phone: 650-793-7330

Email: uccmhdPastor@gmail.com

6. CLOSING THOUGHTS



CLOSING PRAYER

*Holy One,
We give thanks for the life of our church,
for the faith that sustains us,
the love that binds us,
and the hope that leads us forward.
We pray for the minister who is even now journeying toward us:
a Pastor with courage and compassion,
a teacher who will help us listen for your still-speaking voice,
a companion who will walk with us in joy and in sorrow,
a dreamer who will join us in imagining what love can do.
Together, may we reach out without hesitation:
to welcome the stranger,
to serve the hungry,
to house the unhoused,
to garden side by side with neighbors,
to stand in solidarity with those who have been marginalized,
to sing a new song that reflects your extravagant welcome!
May we meet one another with open hearts.
May we build together a community that reflects your justice, mercy, and grace.
May your Spirit guide our steps and shape our shared ministry,
as we seek to be Christ's hands and heart in this world.
We offer this prayer in the name of Love.
Amen.*

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

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

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

Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile?

Search and Call Committee: Co-Chairs: Lavonne Horton and Debbie Olson.

Members: Tony Christensen, Gina Harvey, Glen Kirk, Honorato Magbanua, and Don McCullagh

Past Church Moderator: Brian Booth

Past Church Board Treasurer: Mindy Bueng

Signatures of Co-Chairs

Name: Debra S Olson

Signature: Debra S Olson

Date: 06-25-2025

Name: Lavonne Horton Lavonne Horton

Signature: Lavonne Horton

Date: 06-25-2025

VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

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

Staff Comment:

Northern Plains Conference
acting as Association

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

Staff Comment:

yes

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

Staff Comment:

yes

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature:

Name / Title:

Email:

Phone:

Date:

Deborah J Blood

Deborah J Blood, Conference Minister

djblood@npcucc.org

207-530-0429

6/26/26

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



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

