



Profile for Pilgrim Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

July 25, 2022

UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

Pilgrim Congregational Church
Leominster, Massachusetts 01453

Settled Pastor

Southern New England UCC

Updated July 16, 2023

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*“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)

POSITION POSTING

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

1a. LISTING INFORMATION

Church name: Pilgrim Congregational Church
Street address: 26 West Street, Leominster, MA 01453
Supplemental web links: www.pcc1743.com

Conference: Southern New England UCC Conference

UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person: Rev. Carol Steinbrecher
Area Conference Minister, North Central Region
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Summary Ministry Description:

In a short paragraph, reflect on where your church is going and what it might look like when you get there. What do you need to get there? Who are you seeking to join you on this part of your church's faith journey?

Pilgrim Congregational Church (PCC) lies just off the green in beautiful, historic downtown Leominster; a small, culturally and economically diverse city, located in the northern Worcester hills of central Massachusetts. Less than an hour southeast lies the city of Boston, a world-renowned hub of education, science, medical and cultural activities. Boston is easily accessed by car or, if you are looking for a relaxing ride, Leominster's recently renovated commuter rail. The city of Leominster boasts over 2000 acres of green space, including the city-owned apple orchard Sholan Farms. We are home to miles of hiking trails, a State Forest, and many city parks. If walking is not your thing, hop on your bike on our 7 mile Twin City Rail Trail for bicyclists, skaters and walkers. This recently-opened trail spans from downtown Leominster to the center of Fitchburg, our neighboring city.

Pilgrim UCC is an active church community. We have enthusiastically embraced the 21st century, attempting to meet the challenges of this brave new world. We are very proud of our recently renovated church, including our brand new multimedia system. We live-stream our worship services and we are the caretakers of a spectacular pipe organ. Our modernized service is a testament to our commitment to this spiritual community being a meld of traditional and nontraditional worship.

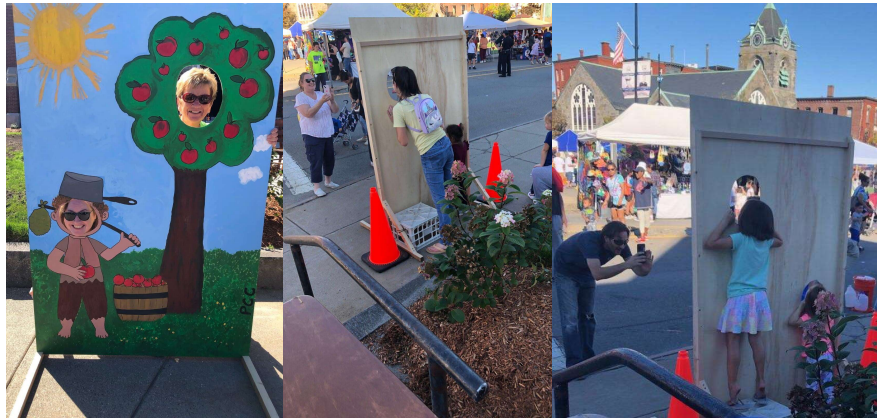
We are looking for a leader to not only build on our open hearts, but also to help us open further and dig deep so that we may bring our strengths, skills and love further and deeper into the greater community. We need someone who has the ability to discern the gifts of their flock. PCC needs a leader that has a big sky-view picture, who thinks outside of the box, is willing to get their hands dirty, and brings along their enthusiasm to walk the talk as our Savior has taught us.



Left: members having a picnic on the back lawn of the church; Right: church members and community members at the Treasures In Our Trunks, as part of the city-wide yard sale in 2022.

What we value about living in our area

1. We are a city with a small town feel boasting an active Community Development Office that promotes business and community growth.
2. A public school system that is dedicated to constantly improving the student learning experience. An amazing library, restaurants representing an array of culinary diversity, shops, movie theaters and minutes from the best ice cream on the planet (you decide which farm!)
3. There is a festival for everyone - including the Johnny Appleseed Arts & Cultural Festival named for our native son John Chapman; and Starburst, a wholesome community event with food, fun, and fireworks. Seasonal festivals and celebrations, activities for children and adults alike, woven into the fabric of our daily lives, make Leominster a welcoming, exciting and safe place to call home.



Church members taking part in the city's Johnny Appleseed Festival.

Current size of membership:

We currently have a membership role of 235 members, 104 of which are active and 131 who are inactive. An active member of PCC is defined by one or more of the following: attends Sunday worship regularly, pledges financially to Pilgrim on a regular basis, is actively involved in one or more of Pilgrim's standing committees or ministries, or is an adult child of an active member or family who is currently away attending college but still considered a dependant. Our recent advancement in technology, which includes real-time broadcasting on YouTube, has increased our worship participation by more than 50 additional viewers. The Covid situation around the world has reduced our in-person attendance to between 40-50; however, it has allowed our church to step into the 21st century to broadcast to those who no longer live nearby or may not yet feel comfortable enough to attend in person.

Position Title: Settled Pastor

Pilgrim Church is looking for a full-time settled pastor.

1b. SCOPE OF WORK

(add here the Scope of Work developed by your church using the Call Agreement Workbook)

Core Competencies:

(List three core competencies that you imagine could be foundational in your next minister's relationship with the church. For example, a church seeking a pastoral care minister might hope to call someone who is caring, sensitive and sociable, while a church seeking an executive minister might want an organized, detail-oriented and time-conscious person.)

Pilgrim Congregational Church is seeking a well-informed individual to become our settled pastor. These are the core competencies that we are looking for:

1. Someone who understands the purpose and role of a church ministering in the 21st century; who is able to navigate the changes of social and technological approaches of ministry; and who is able to weave together the old with the new.

We are proud of the advances made thus far to our worship ministry, brought on by the COVID pandemic in 2020.

2. A pastor who exudes compassion for all of God's children in their various stages and struggles through life. We are looking for someone who is not only comfortable to share with us, but who also invites others to feel comfortable to share their life with the church family. We desire someone who is respectful to all no matter their age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or life's challenges. The person we are looking for is inviting and reflects our sense of being welcomed into this gathering of people.

3. A person who can support our experiences of community and fellowship within and outside of our church walls, and who can strengthen our ministry to our virtual community. We are looking for someone who will work alongside us to identify ways to build fellowship with everyone - from young adults to shut-ins. This person needs to be able to connect people's initial sense of being welcomed into God's family into their everyday lives.



A Broadway Tea was enjoyed by many.

1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

We have sufficient funding to meet the Conference compensation guidelines. Depending on the needs and requirements of our new pastor, we are expecting the compensation to be in the range of \$110 - \$130 thousand dollars annually. This will be inclusive of the items listed below.

- Salary
- Housing allowance
- S.S.
- Life Insurance allowance
- Health Insurance allowance
- Annuity allowance
- Reimbursable expenses

We expect our new pastor to reside within a 15 to 30-minute commute from Leominster.

Describe peer and professional supports available for ministers in your association/conference: While our own Pastor-Parish Committee provides support for the pastor, most certainly and understandably other support and resources are necessary for their personal growth, self-care and well-being.

The SNEUCC website <https://www.sneucc.org/> is a compendium of resources for clergy members. There exists endless opportunities for creating covenantal relationships (both locally and internationally), leadership resources to become “agents of change” in the 21st century and

Clergy “Communities of Practice,” in which members share best practices, challenges and victories, and confidential support.

The Southern NEUCC Discipleship Facebook Page (public) also allows for the sharing of ideas and of resources. Webinars and Zoom sessions are available on a number of topics. In these challenging times, it’s a great “marketplace” for networking.

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

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

Our new pastor will:

- Lead us by example through preaching, teaching and witness.
- Continue to move our church into the 21st century, embracing some of our established traditions while introducing new ones specifically pertaining to the worship service and religious education opportunities.
- Support the ministries that serve the needs of those within the congregation and those outside our church walls.
- Be a scholarly pastor who is capable of conveying historical and biblical context, specifically (but not exclusively) pertaining to the original languages of the bible, including Greek, Hebrew, Chaldean, and Aramaic.
- Have the ability to discern the gifts of their flock.
- Be a compassionate listener and effective communicator.
- Promote equality and inclusion of all.
- Be an agent of change within the church.

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

- We envision our new pastor embracing a wide-range view of the concept of “community” by developing relationships with both ecumenical and secular leaders.
- We envision our next pastor to bring us further into the community of Leominster, wanting to be involved with our current outreach programs and also bringing new ideas and innovative ways to reach the greater Leominster area.
- We hope that our new pastor will enthusiastically participate in fellowship events and current ministries.

- We desire to be people of God and to do the work that Jesus began. Our new pastor will be passionate but wise in action concerning inequality and injustice, and see that their flock is as well.

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

PCC does not have any additional language requirement for our next ministerial leader.

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

1. Exhibiting a spiritual foundation and ongoing spiritual practice. This is important to us because we want a pastor who encourages and nurtures others in lifelong spiritual formation and faith development.
2. Building Transformational Leadership Skills. We feel that it is important for our pastor to understand the dynamics and appreciate the gifts of our congregation so that we can be empowered to minister to others.
3. Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions. We want a pastor who has the skills to use appropriate interpretive lenses on biblical passages, adapts them to our world today, and who presides over the sacraments meaningfully and with integrity.
4. Strengthening inter- and intra-personal assets. As it is important for our pastor to provide pastoral care without discrimination, it is also important for our pastor to practice self-care, and knowledgeably observe personal and professional boundaries.

2. WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME?

Who is God calling you to become as a congregation?

Toward the end of 2019, the congregation began a series of five all-church Dialogue Sessions, in which both our understanding of who we are and our collective vision for PCC's future was discerned. The first two sessions, lasting approximately three hours each, were attended by an average of sixty members.

In **Session #1**, we brainstormed and distilled questions that we deemed the most critical for our future. The process produced the following two questions, **“What is the role of the church**

today, and how can we live into that purpose?” and “How do we navigate change and update our approach, blending the old with the new?”

Session #2 presented the discussion of concepts critical to church life. This enormous list was whittled down by attendees, keeping in mind our results from the first session. At the top of our list were what we deemed most critical for our church to thrive: **“Community and Belonging, Transformation and Music, and Comfort and Compassion.”**

The results of sessions I and II were merged to give us the following **5 Core Values**:

- Being a 21st Century Church
- Welcoming Environment
- Community and Fellowship
- Worship and Spiritual Life
- Outreach

Then March of 2020 came with the COVID pandemic. During that year we had to take a break from holding our Dialogue Sessions. In 2021, when we were able to safely gather again, we did so in small groups of 15, masked and socially distanced, rather than in one big group.

Session #3, meeting on three consecutive Sundays, dealt with how the pandemic impacted and changed us.

Session #4 focused on our strengths and challenges as a church, assessing the need for decisions regarding what aspects of ministry we should continue to resource, and what ones we should let go of. We have identified the following strengths that need additional resourcing and support:

- financial strength
- communication
- technology
- music
- our building campus

We have also identified the weaknesses that need significant re-enforcing and support:

- engage multi-culturally
- external communication
- Christian education
- community outreach
- outreach to our shut-ins

A weakness that we need to relinquish is recruiting young families, and although we no longer have a children's ministry, the congregation would be excited to rediscover this opportunity if it arises.

Session #5 was facilitated by way of a version of "World Café," and focused on our collective desired gifts, skill sets and characteristics of our next pastor. Those we are hoping to find are the following:

- Pastoral - a person who is approachable and provides pastoral care by being compassionate and counseling the flock
- Family - a person who will be bringing their family values and/or family to church, and who can work with the children that attend church
- Local Community - someone who engages the church in outreach, and is involved in the local community
- Integrity - a reliable and trustworthy person who can show humility
- Change Agent - someone who can bring about change with vision and inspiration
- Preach/Teach - a biblical scholar able to create relevant sermons
- Leadership - a leader who will empower laity
- Worship - a person who can build creative and spiritual worship services
- Conflict Management - someone who can resolve issues between members individually or by proper channels
- Communication - a communicator who is first an active listener

In addition, with near unanimity, the congregation overwhelmingly seeks a pastor with a collaborative style of leadership.

We are called to be a people and place where you feel at home, receive compassion, feel respected, and feel valued as one loved by God. We aspire to be an inviting congregation to the person that is new to the area and came upon PCC, to the person who has lived here for years and enters out of curiosity, to the person who is well-off and to the person who struggles to provide, to the person who looks and acts differently, and to the person who has been in the church since birth.

God is calling us to embrace the work done in the past two years of transforming into a 21st century church. We value both our in-person and virtual worship experiences and will continue to support these ministries. We are called to be a people of spiritual life. It is important to us to provide a meaningful and inspirational worship experience through scripture, music, and faith-grounding rituals.

Through God’s transformative power, we are called to be the hands and feet of God, to reach out to our local communities through ways already established, and to seek new opportunities to serve those who need help in this untidy life. We are also called to build fellowship experiences among those in our congregation, the organizations that we support, and those that we serve. God calls us to think outside of the box to meet people wherever they are on their life’s journey.

As we embrace new ways of extending our hearts and our hands to those around us in our community and in the world, we pray that God continues to guide and inspire us, and that we can guide and inspire each other. We hope that our mission to reach out to others and share what we have has just begun, and that we can continue to honor the Lord in everything that we do.



Members learning at an event held at the Leominster Historical Society.

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

For example, describe two experiments your congregation has initiated or engaged in the past year, what were the results and where do you see your next steps? Has your church had a multi-year strategic plan or vision statement; if so, where do you see that plan/vision taking you?

Like most churches across the country, during the pandemic, gatherings could not safely be held and our congregation was homebound. Church leadership did not want to lose touch with those in the congregation and members of PCC did not want to lose their experiences of being in worship. God provided the opportunity and the means to answer our questions from dialogue session#1 and made it possible for our church pastors and congregation to build a virtual worship ministry. When we were able to return to having in-person worship four months later, we understood that there was still a need for our virtual worship and the audience it had created. We welcome you to visit our YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHHmEAwU_pXTteN2FTfaA3g.

We saw that the pandemic forced us to rethink the concept of “church,” bringing us into the 21st century, and we did not want to back track on the progress good work made. Our virtual worship

ministry reached those that we know but also some that we did not know. In renovating our beautiful sanctuary in 2021, technological upgrades needed to further support both in-person and virtual worship ministries were completed. We have employed a media technician to oversee and maintain the new technology and provide training in the operations. In order to continue living into the purpose of a 21st-century church we acknowledge that there is still more work to be done for us to transform PCC.

Due to the pandemic, PCC discontinued the position of Organist/Music Director, thus forcing a change in our music ministry. Our worship music shifted from the traditional worship with pipe organ, piano, choir, and solo performance to a mixture of traditional and contemporary Christian music provided by means of piano, organ, vocal solos, and recorded music. We have been so blessed! Our Interim Senior Pastor is a truly gifted musician. His guidance, creativity and talent have allowed us not only to continue to enjoy traditional and classical pieces, but also to enter into the unexplored territory of contemporary Christian music. Along with our Associate Pastor, who is also very musical, and some willing members who share their talents, our Sunday service is replete with a variety of inspirational music for everyone to enjoy. A recent music survey posed to our membership overwhelmingly affirmed the desire to continue providing an equal mixture of traditional and contemporary Christian music in the worship experience. PCC is currently in the process of seeking a new music director.

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

Describe your congregation’s life of faith.

The weekly opening to our Sunday service is the UCC motto, “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.” This truly represents the attitude that is offered

to any and all who visit, whether they are members or occasional visitors. We are a congregation with a mix of people and families that have been involved for generations, as well as many who have joined or visited recently. Our life of faith seeks to be all-encompassing. As we look around the sanctuary, the faces that we see don't just show up for the hour on Sunday. They are the faces we see at committee meetings, the ones we see at church activities and community events, the ones we see at funerals to support others in their loss, and those that we share our joys with. They are our friends, and many times the ones we call family. We strive to live up to our church covenant which states, "We pledge to walk together in the ways of the Lord, revealed to us in the past, in the present, and in the future. We give ourselves unreservedly to the mission of the Church to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world. Relying on God's grace, we will strive for truth, compassion, justice, and peace. We will be ever mindful of the welfare of our fellow members and walk with them in faithfulness and Christian love."

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

We are proud to have an enthusiastic and involved congregation that provides a nurturing environment for all who attend. We offer a time of camaraderie after each Sunday service around food and drink, and our fellowship extends far beyond Sunday. The people who make up our amazing congregation care for one another as well as the wider community. Our church continues to serve the people of Leominster from providing meals for the needy to helping those who are victims of disasters: fire, natural, or economic.



Members holding a baby shower for a family affected by an apartment fire.

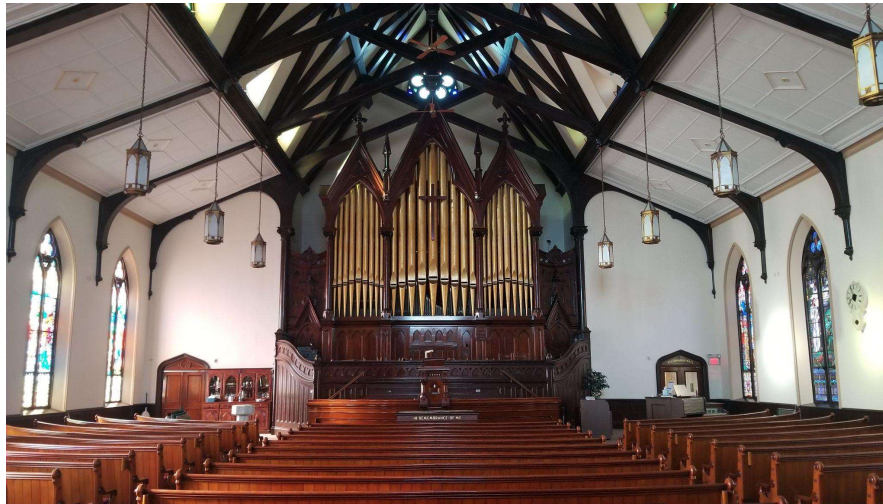
The lay leadership in our church works tirelessly in the forefront, but even more so behind the scenes to ensure that we proceed and progress in a positive manner. The work of our many dedicated lay leaders shows the strength of our adaptability, and at times the courage to forge forward. Our recent physical renovations bring beauty and serenity to the worship space. The technology upgrades enhance the worship experience and allow us to share our message both in person and remotely to those who participate weekly.



Pictured above is a message being projected in the sanctuary due to our technology upgrades.

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

For example, where does worship take place, and what is it based around? What was a recent baptism like? What are some words used to describe good preaching?



Imagine walking into a 19th century post and beam structure with vaulted ceilings with a two-story pipe organ, light streaming in through the historic and magnificent stained glass windows, each of which tells its own biblical story. Hear the sounds of inspirational music as you greet your church family and make your way to your seat. View announcements and reflective messages relevant to the upcoming sermon projected by our multimedia system. Your heart and mind will then be opened to a call to worship, an opening hymn or contemporary song, followed by announcements, a children's moment, prayers, readings from the bible, lessons in today's time that tie in with the scripture reading, songs, and a benediction.

The weekly message is not always in the form of a traditional sermon. We have experienced mini-dramas, sermon series such as “Wine as a Metaphor” and “Praxis of Prayer,” and a laid-back summer series of answering some of our congregation’s challenging biblical questions. Recently, at our annual church picnic, we experienced the baptism of children and adults in a novel ceremony. The picnic was held at a house on a pond and the baptism was conducted in the water by submersion, very much like baptisms of old. It was inspirational.



Celebrating an outside of the box baptism on Sunday, August 29, 2021.

Good preaching:

- Consists of material that the listener is able to hold onto in their heart and mind and carry with them beyond the moment of receiving the sermon
- Probes questions that should stir the listener, causing them to reflect on their personal and cultural ethics; inviting them to discover what they, as mirrors, are reflecting back into the world
- Smoothly weaves together scripture and lessons relevant in today's world, and brings the listener closer in relationship with God

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

For example, how are young people in leadership? How do people continue to form their faith over a lifetime? Name a topic studied or curriculum used recently; what was the impact of this study on those who attended?

In recent years, PCC had a small vibrant Christian Education program spanning from little children to teenagers. Over time, young families have grown older with very few new young families entering. While this has happened, there has been an increasing number of adults who have sought out and participated in Adult Bible Studies. Prior to COVID, with only having a couple of young children in attendance, PCC considered it fiscally unwise to continue maintaining a paid Christian Education Director. At that time, the Christian Education Committee was

disbanded. Though this change was made, PCC has continued to provide the Children's Moment for the few children in attendance, and has incorporated other meaningful ways for the children to participate in church life.

Our pastors have offered seasonal Bible studies. These spiritually fulfilling and informative weekly sessions, offered both during the day and in the evening, have included texts by Adam Hamilton: "Not a Silent Night," "Simon Peter," and "Christianity and World Religions." The lesson learned, from the latter study, was that although there may exist many differences between us, what we have in common can lead us all to be more open, more spiritual and more willing to share with our neighbors. The book study for 2020, "Christianity for the Rest of Us", brought us into the land of Zoom as the pandemic changed our lives, followed by 2021's "The Great Emergence." Our most recent adult education study "Wine as a Metaphor", offered in person during the Lenten season of 2022, was about unpacking the unique traits of different wines, how they have been influenced by various factors, and how those elements of the wine's growth parallel the life of the Christian on their faith journey.

Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

For example, how are decisions communicated in your church? How are teams or committees organized? Where does your church struggle for vision?

- When it comes to decision-making, how many hours are spent in meetings per month?
- Think of a time when action had to be taken quickly, for example when a crisis or disaster occurred. How was that accomplished?
- Can you provide the next minister with a copy of an organization structure, bylaws and/or annual report to further explain the patterns of the church's activity and governance? [Yes]

PCC's leadership is traditional, lay-led. We have an annual church meeting which takes place in January, while all-church meetings take place as needed. Warrants are posted in advance and the meetings take place after Sunday worship. Most committees meet monthly for approximately one hour and call additional meetings as needed. The committee structure is as follows:



Members and children taking part in the Hanging of the Greens Service on Sunday, December 6, 2020.

The Executive Committee

Voted into existence in the 2021 annual meeting and empowered on the full Council's behalf, the Executive Committee is a sub-committee of the chief officers of the church, consisting of the Moderator, Clerk, Head of Trustees, and Pastor. They meet monthly, allowing the full Council to meet quarterly.

The Coordinating Council

The Coordinating Council is composed of the Pastor, Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Collector, Lay Delegate and Historian. In addition, it includes the Chairperson or a representative from the Trustees, Diaconate and all committees described below. The Council allows for effective coordination and communication between committees and helps to execute short-term and long-term planning in the life of the Church.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees consists of 5 members plus the Treasurer, Asst. Treasurer, and one Emeritus member. The Board oversees the church finances, approves the annual budget, and manages lease agreements with tenants. It also supervises building maintenance and repair, thus procuring contracts and making sure that funding is provided for all maintenance and security work (both expected and unexpected). There have been instances when an immediate need for decisions regarding the building infrastructure were called for. The Trustees, through in-person or telephone conversation, acted quickly to provide answers where a delay may have caused additional problems.

Diaconate

The Diaconate is composed of 8 members who are tasked with helping the pastor with the spiritual needs of the congregation. They participate in worship services as needed, by reading Scripture, assisting with Holy Communion, greeting worshippers, and taking responsibility for the overall décor of the sanctuary. They provide assistance during funeral services, send flowers and plants for bereavements and hospitalizations, and visit shut-ins and other church members. The Deacons also organize special events in the life of the church including the homecoming lunch and the Agape meal on Maundy Thursday. The former Board of Worship was recently merged with the Diaconate to provide ongoing creative input for services.

Fellowship Committee

The Fellowship Committee welcomes new visitors into fellowship and hosts a variety of activities throughout the year to create a sense of warmth, camaraderie and family amongst our members and attendees. We all look forward to the Family Picnic, the coveted and well-attended Annual Tea, book club, and cultural events. The Fun Fellowship Fridays are a monthly social activity-whether it be a service project to bring community outreach, a visit to places such as the Historical Society, or sharing the history of our beautiful stained glass windows. The members of this Committee are the friendly faces greeting the community during citywide events, such as the Johnny Appleseed Festival and the Winter Stroll.



Left: 2021's Virtual Quaran "Tea"; Right: 2022's Agatha Chris "Tea".

Mission Ministries

The Mission Ministries do God's work by fulfilling local, national, and international needs. Our own Pilgrim Food Pantry provides food to our neighbors in need right here in Leominster. Imagine the important lifeline this has been during the Pandemic. Each year on Super Bowl

Sunday, we participate in the “Souperbowl for Caring,” donating the proceeds to a local charity that helps people with food insecurity. In 2002, members of PCC, in conjunction with other local churches, founded a family homeless shelter known as Montachusett Interfaith Hospitality Network. MIHN now operates as a local branch of North Star Family Services, a national organization providing food and shelter for homeless families. This local organization has assisted over 150 families to return to permanent housing. Another ministry, Daily Bread, is a breakfast held on Saturday mornings for those in need of a good meal. Though it was on hiatus during the pandemic, it restarted this past April. In addition, annual educational scholarships are available to church members and their families. Other charities receiving donations include, but are not limited to, Habitat for Humanity, American Red Cross, Crop Walk for Hunger, CWS Blanket Drive, Battered Women’s Resources, and the American Cancer Society. The Fellowship Committee, Food Pantry, North Star and Daily Bread each send a representative to the Mission Ministries meeting. Our church is fortunate to have many among us who seek out those who are in need.



A group from PCC returned from the Crop Walk To End Hunger on October 17, 2021.

Pastor/Parish Committee

The Pastor/Parish Committee works to optimize communications between the pastor and the church members, while providing the utmost in confidentiality and sensitivity. This committee advocates for the pastor in matters of ministry, personal concerns and professional growth, and is responsible for conveying pastoral needs in these areas to the church membership when required. In the case of a newly called pastor, the Search Committee is prepared to serve as the temporary Pastor/Parish Committee for one year, to provide a smooth transition and support for the new pastor and the congregation.

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee fulfills the role of Human Resources at PCC, ensuring that all non-pastoral positions are filled and that the church operates efficiently from day to day.

Stewardship Committee

The Stewardship Committee coordinates the annual pledge drive, asking members and friends to prayerfully consider their commitments of time, talent and financial gifts to the church. On Stewardship Sunday, pledge cards are brought up to the altar, in faith and gratitude for all that God has given us. This group helps to assist other committees with recruiting and filling volunteer vacancies.

Music Committee & Christian Education Committee - Currently suspended.



Members enjoying “Wine As A Metaphor” Bible study in 2022.

3b. 11-YEAR REPORT

(add here the 11-Year Report developed with the help of your conference staff, UCC Data Hub, and MissionInsite)

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



Church#: 784031
 Assoc: 905 Schedule: 0 Pilgrim Congregational Church United Church of Christ Leominster MA 01453

YEAR	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	CONFIRMATION	CONFESSION	TRANSFER OR REAFFIRM	DEATHS OR TRANS OUT	OTHER LOSSES	NET MEMBS ADDS-REMOVED
2010	318	157	87	6	5	0	8	0	3
2011	319	157	79	1	6	0	5	1	1
2012	326	211	66	8	9	0	8	2	7
2013	335	179	65	4	11	0	3	3	9
2014	340	154	46	0	11	0	5	1	5
2015	348	119	58	6	5	0	3	0	8
2016	318	121	40	1	0	9	9	31	-30
2017	310	109	59	0	0	0	0	0	0
2018	300	89	44	1	3	0	8	2	-6
2019	300	89	44	0	0	0	0	0	0
2020	300	89	44	0	0	0	0	0	0

YEAR	CURRENT EXPENSES	CAPITAL PAYMENTS	BASIC SUPPORT	TOT OTHER UCC GIVING	TOTAL OCWM	OTHER GIFTS	WIDER MISSION	BASIC SUPP% CURR LOCAL	TOTAL EXPEND	PLEDGES AND OFFERINGS
2010	\$241,247	\$0	\$0	\$5,480	\$5,480	\$10,260	\$15,740	0.00	\$256,987	\$181,999
2011	\$243,722	\$0	\$0	\$7,735	\$7,735	\$8,924	\$16,659	0.00	\$260,381	\$171,594
2012	\$237,981	\$0	\$0	\$1,498	\$1,498	\$9,820	\$11,318	0.00	\$249,299	\$176,995
2013	\$237,981	\$0	\$0	\$8,787	\$8,787	\$5,865	\$14,652	0.00	\$252,633	\$192,197
2014	\$253,617	\$0	\$0	\$8,302	\$8,302	\$4,724	\$13,026	0.00	\$266,643	\$180,699
2015	\$246,755	\$0	\$0	\$6,528	\$6,528	\$7,410	\$13,938	0.00	\$260,693	\$189,465
2016	\$272,230	\$0	\$0	\$7,887	\$7,887	\$8,369	\$16,256	0.00	\$288,486	\$188,093
2017	\$289,358	\$0	\$0	\$1,458	\$1,458	\$12,031	\$13,489	0.00	\$302,847	\$154,394
2018	\$377,339	\$0	\$0	\$1,209	\$1,209	\$10,268	\$11,477	0.00	\$388,816	\$163,978
2019	\$377,339	\$0	\$0	\$625	\$625	\$0	\$625	0.00	\$377,964	\$0
2020	\$377,339	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.00	\$377,339	\$0

% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	TOTAL ADDITIONS	TOTAL REMOVALS	CURR LOCAL EXPENSES	TOTAL OCWM	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
2015-2020	-13.79	-25.21	-24.14	-100.00	-100.00	52.92	-100.00	44.74
2010-2020	-5.66	-43.31	-49.43	-100.00	-100.00	56.41	-100.00	46.83

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

3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	104	We also have 131 non-active members.

Number of active non-members:	10	
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	114	

Number of total participants who have been in the church:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	70	x
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	30	x
Less than 5 years:	14	x

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>
9	8	9	2	8	10	15	15	20	x

Number of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	11	X
Households with minors:	12	X
Single adults age 35-65:	2	X
Joint households with no minors:	59	X
Single adults over 65:	30	X

Education level of adult participants by number:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	19	X
College:	70	X

Graduate School:	20	X
Specialty Training:	5	X
Other (please specify):	N/A	X

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

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

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

White-collar, Blue-collar, Education, Hospitality, Construction, Medicine, and Finance.

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

Ninety-eight percent of our congregation is Caucasian, although the city of Leominster is more ethnically diverse. According to the MissionInsite report, as of 2021 the city of Leominster is 72% white, 16% Hispanic/Latino, 5% black/African American, 3% Asian, and 4% other.

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

We had a session regarding ONA on January 23, 2022. Please see Section 4a for details.



The desserts and drinks members provided for our picnic and baptism in August 2021.

3d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING

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

Ways of Gathering	Estimated number of people involved in attendance	Who plans each of the listed gatherings? <i>(list any and all worship planners, such as various lay leaders, pastors, musicians, other staff)</i>
Adult Groups or Classes	20	Pastor
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>	4	Pastor
Children's Groups or Classes		
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	110+	Pastor
Church-wide Meals		
Choirs and Music Groups		
Church-based Bible Study	10-15	Pastor
Communion <i>(monthly)</i>	50	Pastor

Community Meals	Varies	“Daily Bread” team w/PCC Volunteers
Confirmation (<i>number confirmed last year</i>)		
Drama or Dance Program		
Funerals (<i>number last year</i>)	6	Pastor
Intergenerational Groups		
Outdoor Worship	75	Pastor
Prayer or Meditation Groups		
Public Advocacy Work		
Retreats		
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community		
Weddings (<i>number last year</i>)		
Worship (time slot: 10:00 a.m)	50 in person, 25 online	Pastor & Lay Leaders
Young Adult Groups or Classes		
Youth Groups or Classes		
Other - Social Meetings	10-25	Lay Leadership

Additional comments: A grief support group is in the process of being established at our church.

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

Name	Three- or Four-Way Covenant? (3 or 4 or No)	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired? (Y or N)
N/A				

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:

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

Staff Position	Head of Staff?	Compensation (full time, part time, volunteer)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
Interim Pastor	Head of Staff	Full time		3 years
Administrative Assistant		Part time	Head of Staff	3 years
Sunday Sexton		Part time	Head of Staff	8 years
Technical Supervisor		Part time	Head of Staff	2 years

REFLECTION

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

This information reveals that we are an aging congregation. We would welcome younger families and more diverse members to reflect the diversity of our community. We are excited about doing ministry work outside our doors. There is exploration still to be done regarding different ways to minister internally and externally.



Pictures from our Treasures In Our Trunks, our part in the city-wide yard sale in the spring of 2022.

3e. CHURCH FINANCES

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

Please see the attached budget below.

Pilgrim Congregational Church 2022 Proposed Budget		Actual 2020	Budget 2020	Actual 2021 to 11/27	Budget 2021	Budget 2022	Notes
Income							
4000 Pledges							
4010 Current Pledges							???
4020 Loose Offerings	103,433	100,000	99,900	107,000	109,000		???
4040 Prior Year Pledges	2,297	2,000	2,186	2,200	1,800		???
Total 4000 Pledges	1,318	600	6,836	1,000	1,000		???
4100 Special Collections							
4120 Easter Offering							
4130 Initial Offering	75	600	495	300	500		
4140 Messenger Offering	495	300	280	500	300		
4150 Other offerings with (Thanksgiving & Christmas)	280	400	155	300	100		
Total 4100 Special Collections	545	1,800	405	400	400		
4200 Fundraisers	1,375	3,100	1,335	1,500	1,300		
4220 Other fundraising							
4220 Other fundraising	71	6,000	0	500	100		
Total 4200 Fundraisers	71	6,000	0	500	100		
4300 Rental Income							
4300 Rental Income	4,225	6,900	3,275	2,700	3,200		
4400 AMEX cash back							
4400 AMEX cash back			191				
4500 Interest Earned *							
4500 Interest Earned *	20		62				
Total Receipts	112,737	118,600	113,786	114,900	116,400		
Total Receipts	112,737	118,600	113,786	114,900	116,400		
Expenses							
5000 Staff Expenses							
5100 Pastor Expenses							
5110 Pastor Salary	49,813	51,803	25,664	27,803	27,803		
5120 Pastor Housing Allowance	36,000	36,000	55,385	60,000	60,000		
5130 Pastor Social Security	6,665	6,717	6,200	6,717	6,717		
5140 Pastor Life Insurance	1,317	1,317	1,216	1,317	1,317		
5150 Pastor Annuity	12,000	12,000	11,000	12,000	12,000		
5160 Pastor Health/Dental/Disability Insurance	12,168	8,580	11,303	10,920	11,450		
5190 Pastoral Reimbursable Expense	6,000	6,000	6,684	6,000	6,000		
Total 5100 Pastor Expenses	123,963	122,417	117,452	124,757	125,287		
5200 Associate Pastor Expenses							
5210 Associate Pastor Salary	19,240	20,000	18,462	20,000	20,000		
5230 Associate Pastor Social Security	1,529	1,530	1,412	1,530	1,530		
Total 5200 Associate Pastor Expenses	20,770	21,530	19,874	21,530	21,530		
5400 Music Director Expenses							
5410 Music Director Salary	7,851	19,132	0	0	0		???
5430 Music Director Social Security	656	1,464	0	0	0		???
Total 5400 Music Director Expenses	8,507	20,596	0	0	0		
5500 Secretary and Tech Staff Expenses							
5510 Secretary Salary	24,864	26,751	23,040	26,751	26,751		
5530 Secretary Social Security	1,994	2,044	1,763	2,044	2,044		
5540 Technical Supervisor Salary *	3,600	0	6,310	6,500	6,500		
5550 Technical Supervisor Social Security *	275	0	483	497	497		
5560 Webmaster salary *	520	0	420	700	700		???
5570 Webmaster Social Security *	40	0	32	54	54		???
Total 5500 Secretary and Tech Staff Expenses	31,293	28,795	32,048	36,546	36,546		
5600 Sexton Expenses							
5610 Sexton Salary	2,838	2,984	2,679	2,984	3,000		
5630 Sexton Social Security	222	228	205	228	230		
Total 5600 Sexton Expenses	3,060	3,212	2,884	3,212	3,230		
5700 Workers' Comp Insurance	2,918	1,500	1,466	3,000	3,000		
5800 Payroll Processing	2,008	2,200	1,986	2,200	2,200		
5900 Temporary Staff	175	934	0	300	300		
5910 Substitute Organist	175	934	0	300	300		
Total 5900 Temporary Staff	175	934	0	300	300		
Total 5000 Staff Expenses	192,694	201,184	175,709	191,545	192,093		

Pilgrim Congregational Church 2022 Proposed Budget		Actual 2020	Budget 2020	Actual 2021 to 11/27	Budget 2021	Budget 2022	Notes
6000 Operating Expenses							
6100 Facilities Expense							
6110 Alarm System							
6120 Cleaning Service	324	264	1,064	324	350		
6130 Fuel Oil	5,355	7,080	6,790	7,080	7,300		
6140 Maintenance-Building	6,512	12,000	6,308	8,000	10,000		
6150 Maintenance-Organ	8,179	20,000	19,268	20,000	20,000		
6160 Maintenance - Supplies	2,535	3,500	1,350	3,500	3,500		
6170 Trash Removal	0	700	280	500	500		
6180 Utilities	715	840	650	840	840		
6190 Water & Sewer	4,723	6,000	3,863	8,000	6,000		
Total 6100 Facilities Expense	592	600	704	650	850		
6200 Program Expense							
6210 Worship Multi Media *	3,002	3,200	16,314	5,000	6,000		
6230 Christian Education *	0	1,300		5,000	6,000		
6240 Diaconate	276	1,000	522	1,000	1,000		
6250 Growth Committee/fellowship	507	800	305	800	800		
6260 Missions	7,423	7,600	4,592	7,600	7,600		
6285 Ad hoc program expense (Dialogue Sessions) *	223	3,375		0	0		
6290 Pastor Discretionary expense *	992	0	187	1,000	1,000		
Total 6200 Program Expense	12,423	17,275	21,920	20,400	22,400		
6300 Insurance Expense							
6310 Insurance	13,930	13,512	13,779	14,000	14,500		
Total 6300 Insurance Expense	13,930	13,512	13,779	14,000	14,500		
6400 Office Expense							
6410 Computer Support	241	450	1,108	300	1,300		
6420 Copier & Equipment	2,758	3,500	2,131	3,500	3,500		
6430 Office Supplies	609	2,000	1,688	1,500	1,500		
6440 Postage	221	600	440	600	600		
6450 Telephone	1,370	1,600	1,551	1,600	1,700		
6490 COVID-19 Expenses *	126	0	48	200	100		
6495 Bank/Credit Card Charges/PayPal *	261	0	231	300			????
Total 6400 Office Expense	5,587	8,150	7,196	8,000	8,700		
6500 Other Church Related Expense							
6510 Central Association Dues	495	6,495	495	500	500		
Total 6500 Other Church Related Expense	495	6,495	495	500	500		
Total 6000 Operating Expenses	61,369	96,416	83,668	91,794	95,440		
Total Expenses	254,063	297,600	259,377	283,339	287,533		
Net Operating Income	-141,326	(179,000)	(145,591)	(168,439)	(171,133)		
Other Income							
4400 Miscellaneous Income	2,554	400		400	400		
9500 PPP Loan Forgiven	0	0	35,200	0	0		
9000 Endowment Activity	7,950	8,100	41,600	8,100	48,000		
9100 Agency Fund	138,000	170,500	114,400	163,789	124,800		
9200 Day Fund			345,000				
9200 Day Fund (2021 Restoration Project)	145,950	178,600	501,000	171,889	172,800		
Total 9000 Endowment Activity	148,504	179,000	536,200	172,289	173,200		
Total Other Income							
Other Expenses	45,625	0	317,248	3,850	-		
7500 Major Repairs or Purchases	45,625	0	317,248	3,850	0		
Total Other Expenses	102,879	179,000	218,952	168,439	173,200		
Net Other Income	-38,446	0.00	73,361	0	2,067		
Net Income							
Note: *							
Represents accounts renamed or added during 2020							

Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support. What is the percentage? 44%

Has the church ever failed to pay its financial obligations to a minister of the church?
NO

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

- Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM – Basic Support)
- One Great Hour of Sharing
- Strengthen the Church
- Neighbors in Need
- Christmas Fund

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

A budgetary decision was made in 2020 to temporarily not fund OCWM, because giving was impacted by the departure of the previous senior pastor. We have not yet resumed that giving.

What is the church's current indebtedness?

Total amount of loan debt: NONE

Reason for debt: N/A

Are capital and other payments current? YES



Experiencing a play for Reformation Sunday, 2021.

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.

Electrical Upgrade: finished in 2020

Steeple Repairs: finished in 2020

Interior renovation: finished in 2021

Audio-Visual Technical upgrade: started in 2020 and continues

Roof Repairs: finished in 2022

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

We have not had a capital campaign since 2009.

If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe: N/A

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

Does your church have an endowment? YES

What is the market value of the assets? approximately \$ 3,000,000

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

What is the percentage rate of draw (last year, compared to 5 years ago)?

SAME - NTE 4.5%

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

Due to the renovation project to the Sanctuary and to Fellowship Hall, the church has utilized some endowment funding, but has remained under our projection of 4.5%.

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

Indefinite at the present time.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

See the reflection section below.

Other Assets

Reserves (savings): \$0

Investments (other than endowment): \$0

Does your church have a parsonage? No

Describe all buildings owned by the church:

Church building at 26 West St. Leominster, Ma.

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

N/A

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs?

Worship Space, Fellowship Hall, Office, Kitchen, Narthex, and Restrooms

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

For example, when was a time the church made a major budget change? How is the budgeting process done? What new ministry initiative has your church financed?

PCC strives to be good stewards of its finances and assets, while looking for new ways to grow in faithful stewardship of our resources. In February of this year, the Coordinating Council voted to develop a Task Force to begin a conversation with the church about how we can be more faithful and effective stewards of our endowment.



Italian cooking class in 2022

3f. 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.

The first significant event that has shaped our identity was in 1743 when a small group of people, yearning to form a faith community, built our first house of worship. Dedicated and loyal to God's call to minister in Leominster, when disaster came upon the congregation twice with lightning striking the building in 1850 and then burning in 1872, the faithful members persevered. Members acquired the means to make repairs and then rebuild, providing for our present 1873 building.

The next event in history that has shaped us was in 1917 when the congregation voted to change its name to Pilgrim Congregational Church. Finally, the congregation was proud to have the church building registered in 1980 on the National Historic Register. A meaningful accomplishment the church made in 2021 was highlighting the beautiful artwork of our stained glass windows, two of which are Tiffany windows. Plaques were placed on the wall by each stained glass window listing by whom and for whom it was given. These plaques reference the Holy Scripture verses of each inspiring picture.



One of the many beautiful stained glass windows in the sanctuary.

In 2019, with the arrival of our new Interim Senior Pastor, we began a series of dialogue sessions that put the congregation on a road to self-discovery. These sessions allowed us to realize our core values, our strengths and weaknesses, and what we envision for our future as a mission-based church. The results of these sessions were instrumental and invaluable in creating our church profile.

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

The most recent event that reshaped PCC was the COVID pandemic. As previously mentioned in section two, the pandemic caused us to rethink how we connect to God, to each other, and to the wider community. We reinvented how we worship and ended up reinventing ourselves.

Every church has conflict, some minor, some larger. “Where two or three are gathered, there will be disagreement...” Describe your congregation’s values and practices when it comes to conflict. *For example, what is an example of a recent conflict and something your congregation learned from it? Describe an occasion when your church experienced conflict without being able to resolve it well. Does your church have policies, protocols, or structures for dealing with conflict?)*

In 2015, a conflict arose between the Senior Pastor and the Music Director, resulting in the latter’s dismissal. The conflict mushroomed, involving lay leadership and pulling in the Associate Pastor. As the situation devolved, the Senior Pastor failed to display humble leadership. The above events resulted in the departure of several church members and their families. Vestiges of the mishandled situation remained until 2019. Senior lay leadership worked diligently with the Senior Pastor to resolve the issue, but to no avail; at which point, and at leadership’s behest, he retired.

As we entered our transitional time, although there were several members who had no knowledge that a conflict had even existed, it was clear from one of our church Dialogue Sessions that others who were directly involved were still unsure whether it was behind us. Subsequent discussion concluded that the Senior Pastor’s departure helped bring resolution to the issue. As a church, we collectively feel we have moved forward and are embracing a brighter future.

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

Staff member’s name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Rev. Dr. Derek Austin	2019-Jan. 2023	Y
Rev. Daniel Woodman*	2016-2022	Y
Rev. Dr. Keith Alderman	2004-2019	Y
Rev. Eric D. Stroshine	1993-2002	Y
Rev. Paul Thomas	1983-1992	Y

* The Associate Pastor decided to retire in June 2022. PCC currently has no plans to maintain the position of an Associate Pastor.

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

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

Ask us

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



Capturings of some Fun Fellowship Fridays.

4. WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

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

- a. COMMUNITY VISION
- b. MissionInsite

4a. COMMUNITY VISION

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

For example, which service activities has your church participated in this past year? Where has the church participated in global connections of care and justice? What is currently transformational in your church's engagement with neighbors near or far?

Our congregation has been involved in several missions activities previously mentioned in Section 3A. In addition, in the past year when there was a local house fire, our congregation rallied to the aid of the displaced family who were expecting a newborn. The church held a baby shower for this family at which time they were presented with money and gifts. Most recently, when the current Ukrainian crisis began, we entered our "Praxis of Prayer" sermon series in which we learned about the different methods of prayer such as intercessional, conversational, Lectio Divina, discerning, kinesthetic, song, and contemplative prayer. As we practiced each of these prayer methods, the Ukrainian people were one of our focuses. In prayerful response, our congregation raised almost \$1,000 towards Ukrainian Aid through Church World Service. We similarly raised funds for the Afghan refugees last year.

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

We currently have not had participation in meetings or activities of the wider United Church of Christ.

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 checked="" 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 | <input type="checkbox"/> Open and Affirming (ONA) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faithful and Welcoming | <input type="checkbox"/> 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) | <input type="checkbox"/> None |

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

While we are not currently designated as an Open and Affirming congregation, the majority of our congregation is very interested in exploring the process of eventually becoming ONA. Some believe that we already are "open and welcoming" simply by who we are and how we present ourselves but are not completely comfortable engaging an official process to identify ourselves as such in a public statement. The congregation as a whole, however, supports the idea of addressing this further once our new settled pastor arrives.

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

We currently do not have any participation in Ecumenical and interfaith activities.

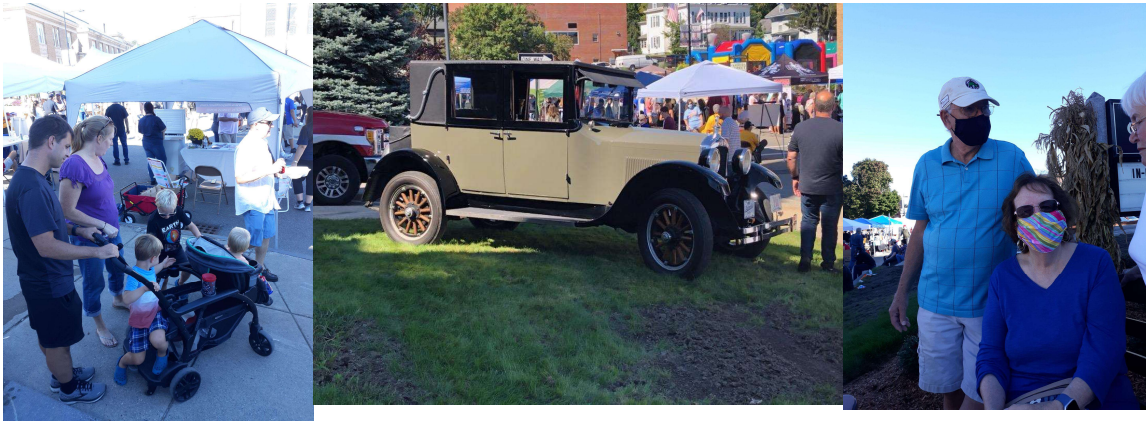
If your congregation has a mission statement, how does that mission statement compare to the actual time spent engaging in different activities? Think of the range of activities from time spent gathering, to governance, to time spent going out.

We currently do not have a mission statement.

Reflect on the scope of work assigned to your pastors. 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?

The scope of work that our congregation expects of our pastor's time is:

- strategic planning for current and new directions in ministry that involves local community engagement
- delegate and develop laity using a collaborative leadership style to create ministry programs and to provide pastoral care
- provide spiritual growth through Bible studies and service to others
- attend meetings and give leadership as needed to church boards and committees
- discern the changes the congregation wants or needs and lead us in that direction



Church members participating in city festivities downtown.

4b. MissionInsite

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

For the Leominster community, the trends in population indicate a slight growth by 2026. The households within the community are growing but not as fast as the population, the average population per household in 2010 was 2.43 and is projected to remain the same by 2026.

- The average household per capita income is projected to increase by 10% to be approximately in the mid-thirty thousand dollar range by 2026
- School-age children are aging through
- There is evidence of a resurgence of children in the younger years
- In households with children under 18, married couple households are decreasing while single parent households are increasing
- Single parent households with children are about the same as the state
- In this community, the current year estimate of marital status reveals a community of adults less likely to be married than the state average for adults
- The percentage of singles never married is lower than the state average
- Divorce is more prevalent than the statewide average
- The educational attainment level of adults has declined over the past few years. It is projected to rise over the next five years by 0.8%
- In 2021 our community was 62% white collar and 38% blue collar

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?

Since we are an aging congregation, primarily Caucasian, our internal demographics do not reflect the MissionInsite report.

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

As we recognize needs in our community, we have addressed them as we are able. We have done this through ways such as North Star Family Services, Daily Bread, and others previously mentioned in the above Section 3a, about our Mission Ministries.

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

When asked what our church is known for, community leaders have commented on Pilgrim's participation in some civic functions, our annual tea, and our annual hosting of the Merrimack Valley Bell Ringers concert. The topic raised above the rest though is our church's dedication to provide food for people in the community by our involvement with Our Daily Bread and our own food pantry.

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

Newcomers consistently commented on the warm and genuine welcome they received from members when they first came to PCC. They observed the enthusiasm and participation of the members and were called to become involved in supporting the church, citing the many opportunities that are available to share one's time and talents. They noted that members put forth a lot of effort to make sure that PCC is in "a good place" and that there is a true focus on the future direction of the church. They are appreciative of the time and effort given by the pastors to the content of the Sunday worship service, which seeks to reach all those in attendance.

5. REFERENCES

REFERENCE 1

Dean J. Mazzarella

Mayor, City of Leominster

dmazzarella@leominster-ma.gov

(978) 534-7500

Mayor of Pilgrim Congregational Church's community

March 4, 2022

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

It is my pleasure to support your process as Pilgrim Congregational Church begins the important work of a pastoral search.

Leominster is a unique community. We pride ourselves on being a diverse and welcoming city with over 50 countries represented within our borders. Our economic success is steeped in history, with many residents' ancestors building Leominster as a strong manufacturing community based in the plastics industry. Our oldest neighborhood, the East Side, was one of the earliest examples of what has today become known as Smart Growth across the United States: the concept that one can live, work and play all within the same neighborhood. At that time, and to this day, it is not uncommon for multiple generations to live in the same multi-family home. We pride ourselves on being a regional hub for Worcester County to meet every need, while maintaining our small-town charm.

Pilgrim Church, located in the center of our beautiful downtown, is one of the oldest staples of our historic Common. It too is intertwined with the city's rich history. For example, the amazing organ pipes in the front of the church were donated by F.A. Whitney. This is the same Whitney Family who for nearly 100 years manufactured the first baby carriages in the United States and employed over 300 residents.

Today Leominster is a center for health care, retail, transportation, and advanced manufacturing to name a few. But at the center of all of it is maintaining a high quality of life for every single resident.

Like many other urban communities, Leominster residents are at different levels of success and

face a myriad of challenges at different points in their lives. It is why city government has established a network of partners who play a critical role in meeting the needs of all our residents. Pilgrim Church has been one of those partners from the first day that I took office over 28 years ago.

Living today can be expensive. It is the reason why we have started more than 30 annual events in the City – most at no cost – so that generations of families can come together and enjoy each other. From downtown strolls, to Kids’ Day, to outdoor concerts, there isn’t a month that goes by that something fun isn’t planned. And whether it is hosting activities on the church’s front lawn during the Johnny Appleseed Festival, or the annual tradition of a Saturday afternoon tea, Pilgrim Church is often at the heart of our community events. Of course, one of my favorite nights of the year is always right after the holidays when Pilgrim hosts the Merrimack Valley Bell Ringers on the first Sunday of January. So peaceful and beautiful.

Perhaps the best example of their dedication to our citizens is their partnership with Our Daily Bread. Together, they provide a weekly Saturday morning breakfast at the church to anyone that needs it. In addition, the church membership gives generously to Pilgrim’s food pantry. I often find that some in the community, many times those that are most in need, are too timid to ask for help. Pilgrim Church provides the service in a way that everyone feels welcome to partake – often even making new friends in the process. And I have to say that despite my office playing a central role in providing constituent services to the Leominster community, we almost never have a request for food thanks to Pilgrim Church and other organizations that work so hard to meet the needs of the community. Believe me, the times that I have stopped by the breakfast I have seen so many happy faces.

The strength of Pilgrim Church’s ministry is steeped in the generations that have helped establish a solid base on which the church continues to build. It is not unusual for its newest members to come to church for the first time being held by their great grandmother. Those roots are what have extended into the community and what lead to members’ friends and family to join. With a positive message each week, and through other educational offerings of the church, Pilgrim Church is truly a place with a strong sense of belonging and a ministry where parishioners are vested in the vision of the future of the church. When members feel they are in a warm and friendly place where they can grow spiritually, the future can be nothing but bright for the congregation.

The most significant challenge facing the ministry is the same challenge that is facing those of us even in government. Reaching our youth. Never has it been more important to invest in the next generation. With so many competing interests, not all of them positive, and seemingly so many more complex problems facing our youth, it is an incredible opportunity for the incoming pastor to embrace and expand youth programming. With so many people moving to Leominster, new residents will most likely make a choice on a congregation by the strength of the children's ministry. As we are discovering in our schools, there are a wealth of resources available to peek kids' interest on any topic. The opportunities to expand the church's youth ministry are endless and will help to embrace new families moving to Leominster.

I have had the pleasure of knowing many of the members of Pilgrim Church since I first became Mayor. They are incredibly dedicated to the future of the church and our community at large. I am confident that the new pastor will be welcomed into the Pilgrim family with open arms and will be fully supported by its members as the church moves forward with its vision for the future.

Sincerely,
Dean J. Mazzarella
Mayor

REFERENCE 2

Dr. Jon Hogue
President & CEO
North Star Family Services
jhogue@northstarfs.org
(978) 466-1704 ext.13
Our contact person for this church mission

March 1, 2022

Dear PCC Search Committee,

North Star Family Services (formerly Montachusett Interfaith Hospitality Network) has been affiliated with Pilgrim Congregational Church (PCC) since 2002. We have a very close and

personal connection to PCC. In all actuality, the North Star agency was the creation of a PCC parishioner, Bonnie Hathaway. Bonnie and the PCC church laid the groundwork and implemented a coalition of ten churches and volunteers known as the Montachusett Interfaith Hospitality Network, family homeless shelter. The rotational model has changed over the years to a static model due to local fire codes and has been sited in Fitchburg and Leominster. Today, each church "owns" a week (4 Xper year) of delivering meals and support to our homeless families within the shelter.

PCC, Bonnie and the coalition worked tirelessly to lay the rotational, volunteer framework that still exists today. North Star has grown into a premiere, nonprofit agency and has been the sole provider of homeless shelter services in our community for twenty years. Due to PCC's continuing leadership and support, North Star has grown and evolved to have its own shelter site in Leominster. The agency also is currently in the process of constructing a housing continuum; including fifteen apartment units of permanent, supportive and affordable housing for extremely low-income families in our community. Over the past twenty years, PCC has donated countless volunteer hours food shopping, meal cooking and staffing "host shifts" in the shelter supporting our homeless families. Holiday gifts have been purchased and wrapped for the parents and children in the shelter. PCC also has consistently made sizable, financial donations to the shelter to assist in its daily operation. In total, over twenty years, I have calculated that PCC has contributed to North Star mission through donation of in-kind items, volunteer hours, as well as, financial donations in excess of **\$ 400,000 worth of support.**

PCC has continued to support the North Star mission through changes in pastors, congregational members, recessions and now a world-wide pandemic. PCC helped build a volunteer coalition that has not faltered to serve the neediest of families in our community during the current life threatening, COVID health crisis.

North Star has a deep level of respect and gratitude to PCC (and Bonnie) for not being afraid to support the struggling families in our community. A need was recognized, and the church gave support to the people that needed it most. Working with families is complex and challenging. Oftentimes, traumatized families are unable to show immediate gratitude due to their focus being in survival mode for their family.

I have served as President & CEO of North Star for the past seven years. Over that time, the PCC church leadership and congregation has demonstrated to me a deep caring for families and willingness to get involved to "help".

I wish you good luck in your pastoral search and am hopeful that PCC will continue to

support the NorthStar Family Homeless Shelter Mission.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jon Hogue President & CEO
North Star Family Services
jhogue@northstarfs.org
(978) 466 - 1704 ext. 13

REFERENCE 3

The Rev. Dr. Karen Nell Smith
Associate Pastor of Faith Formation and Outreach
Edwards Church, UCC
choresis@comcast.net
508-331-3081
Former pastor of a neighboring church in Leominster with whom we shared summer services

April 14, 2022

To whom it may concern:

I have known the congregation of Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC, in Leominster since 2000 when I became the pastor of the Congregational Church of Christ, UCC, in neighboring North Leominster, where I served until the spring of 2019. Throughout those years, we joined in mutual ministry to the community of greater Leominster.

Pilgrim Church is blessed with an active and faithful congregation, an abundance of resources, a well-cared and newly renovated building, and convenient central location on the common. Its presence in downtown Leominster allows the Church to offer a variety of ministries and services in the heart of the city. In the past, the Church has offered assistance to the food insecure and homeless, through Saturday community breakfasts and a food pantry. During my time in the pastorate in North Leominster, leaders of Pilgrim Church played a visionary role in the creation of the City's only homeless shelter for families with children, and the congregation remains committed to this important ministry. As one of the few expressions of progressive Christianity and inclusion for the community, Pilgrim Church also has a unique opportunity to offer an extravagant welcome to those looking for connection and a spiritual home.

Pilgrim Church might improve its ministries by exploring new ways to serve families with

children, finding creative uses for its facilities, and reaching out using the enhanced technology skills gained through the pandemic. It might also officially become an Open and Affirming congregation, making a public commitment to living out that extravagant welcome and radical inclusivity. As in all congregations, the Church has struggled with conflict and healthy communication. Healing and learning from past conflicts will strengthen the congregation's ability to remain resilient, nimble and able to face the challenges ahead.

My most memorable experiences of Pilgrim Church over the years are of shared worship, joining together for summer services, Easter sunrise service, and Community Services of Thanksgiving. With other area congregations as part of the Leominster Interfaith Clergy Association, we also journeyed through so many life-changing events-- 9/11, speaking out against acts of hatred, praying for peace and understanding, and standing together with our colleges and neighbors of other faiths. In working and worshiping together, we ministered to one another and make a difference in our community.

I have known Pilgrim Church to be a congregation of faithful people on a journey of discipleship, caring for each other through life's triumphs, tragedies and transitions and serving the community in which they live. They have great potential to discern God's call for them.

In faith,

The Rev. Dr. Karen Nell Smith

6. CLOSING THOUGHTS

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

6a. CLOSING PRAYER

Include here any prayer or dream for the minister you imagine journeying toward you... a poem, for example, or a Scripture passage or a piece of music that is meaningful to your Search Committee:



Photos of the Pastoral Search Committee hard at work and having fun together.

Inspirational scripture and thoughts from the PCC Pastoral Search Committee:

“And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.” (Jeremiah 3:15)

“And this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are complete, have this attitude.” (Philippians 3:13-14)

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

“A powerful mental shift takes place when we stop telling ourselves why something can’t happen. When we can envision a hoped-for future, we strengthen our belief that it is possible.” (Joanna Macy, “Allegiance to Life”)

Irene Barry
Lisa Cuff
Jordan Daigle
Dan Piper
August 31, 2022 (*updated 1/11/2023*)

6c. VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

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

Staff Comment:

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

Staff Comment:

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

Staff Comment:

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature: *Rev. Carol Steinbrecher*

Name / Title: Carol Stinbrecher, Area Conference Minister – North Central Region, Southern New England Conference, United Church of Christ

Email: SteinbrecherC@sneucc.org

Phone: (508) 244-4887

Date: September 1, 2022 (*updated 7/6/2023*)

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

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