

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

First Congregational Church – United Church of Christ
Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin

Senior Minister

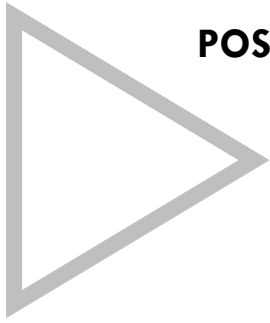
Wisconsin Conference. Northwest Association

[March 29, 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

LISTING INFORMATION

SCOPE OF WORK

COMPENSATION & SUPPORT

WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?

LISTING INFORMATION

Church name: First Congregational Church – United Church of Christ

Street address: 311 2nd Street S, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494

Supplemental web links: wisrapidsucc.net

Conference: Wisconsin Conference

Association: Northwest Association

UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person

Rev. Michael Jones

Associate Conference Minister

608 419-7509

Mjones@WCUCC.org

Summary Ministry Description:

First Congregation Church – United Church of Christ in Wisconsin Rapids is a friendly and welcoming church looking for a restart. Covid has given us the opportunity to look at our church and examine some of the reasons people have come back and why some have chosen not to return. We are ready for a restart focusing on family, youth, and intergenerational relationships. We want to bring back a thriving congregation with a new sense of energy and provide outreach to our local and global communities.

Photographs:



What we value about living in our area:

Wisconsin Rapids is a small community which takes pride in its commitment to community involvement and dedication to providing resources in the arts, library services and schools, including public, private, technical, and virtual. We are an agricultural community with a focus on cranberry and dairy. We have a long history in the wood and paper industries as well. The area provides many recreational options with its many lakes and river as well a network of hiking and biking paths.

Current size of membership: 283

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

Position Title: Senior Minister

Position Duration:

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

Compensation Level:

Full Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines? Yes

SCOPE OF WORK

Core Competencies:

We are seeking a minister who is a welcoming and an organized and effective preacher., An educator to all and relates well to youth. We want someone who thinks outside the box when helping the church make decisions and seeks to expand the congregation.

COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

Salary Basis: Conference Guidelines

Benefits:

Salary plus Benefits: Conference Guidelines

What is the expected living situation for your next minister? Parsonage

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

Parsonage is a modern well-maintained home located across the street from the church.

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

Supportive Ministries; Community of Practice; Area Clergy Group

WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?

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

We are seeking an energetic individual with good communication skills. Someone who will collaborate with the church in providing a solid educational program for all persons and relates well to young families. We hope to increase our membership through a program of outreach and involvement in the community.

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

We are looking for a high energy individual to assist with the promotion of the church through the use of technology, community involvement, and outreach.

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

BUILDING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

- Empowering the Church to be faithful to God's call.
- Encouraging leadership development of self and others through continuing education and lifelong learning.
- Performing necessary and appropriate administrative tasks.
- Working collaboratively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity.

ENGAGING SACRED STORIES AND TRADITIONS

- Exhibiting knowledge, understanding, and continuing study of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament.
- Bringing life to sacred stories and traditions in worship, proclamation, and witness.
- Leading faith formation effectively across generations.

CARING FOR ALL CREATION

- Nurturing care and compassion for God's creation. Maintaining a basic understanding of mental health and wellness.
- Practicing self-care and life balance.
- Attending to one's own spiritual and pastoral care, including engagement in supervision as appropriate. Stewarding the resources of the Church.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE AND MERCY

- Drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression.
- Understanding community context and navigating change with a community.
- Engaging in mission and outreach.
- Building relationships of mutual trust and interdependence.



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 are an open and affirming church that welcomes everyone. We want to be active in our community, promote the good we are doing, and follow the word of God and Jesus. We are looking to have an updated service for all to enjoy.

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

- **Solar Project**

The church installed solar panels to reduce our dependence on outside energy resources. The results were not only a reduction in our energy costs, but also demonstrated to the members of the congregation as well as those in the community the possibility and feasibility of such a project. This project was funded through memorial money, energy grants and donations from the congregation.

- **Incorporating technology**

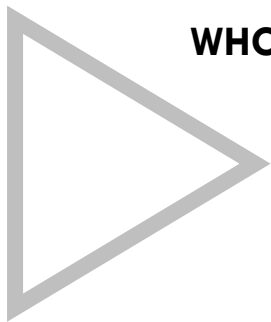
Along with many issues presented by Covid, we faced challenges on how to reach out and provide opportunities for participating in both worship and meetings. The incorporation of Zoom provided a link for these activities. It also brought about the

expansion of technology used in the church. Cameras, projectors, and sound equipment are now used to live stream our church service.

- Upgrading spaces. In addition to the technology upgrades in the sanctuary, our chapel The Chapel has gone through a major remodel. The removal of stationary pews and replacing them with chairs gives us the opportunity to arrange the space to fit a variety of activities. Upgrading the audio/visual equipment has expanded the possible uses for this and other spaces.

With the return to church, fellowship hall has gone through an update as well. New sound equipment and a projector have been added. Long tables have been replaced by round tables which has notably increased the participation during fellowship opportunities.

We are also in the process of reimagining and reorganizing spaces in the church to meet our current and future needs.



WHO ARE WE NOW?

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

CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS

11-YEAR REPORT

CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING

CHURCH FINANCES

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS

Describe your congregation’s life of faith.

We are a welcoming church that is open and affirming to the community. We believe God to be both gracious and forgiving, encouraging us to reach out to those in our own community and beyond.

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

Strengths in our congregation include knowledgeable members in many areas, including maintaining the physical needs of our church as well as our financial needs. We have been blessed with several gifts that have allowed us to meet ongoing expenses as well as provide scholarship opportunities to members for camps and continuing education.

In the area of Creation Care we were able to set an example with the Solar Panel project. Other projects include many landscaping improvements including the addition of adding fruit trees which will provide produce to the neighborhood.

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

We have a fairly traditional service that some would describe as “routine” and at times “low energy”. We are seeking to have a more energetic and engaging service that includes humor and an educational opportunity for those participating.

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

We currently have a Sunday School program for 3-year olds through 6th grade. Since COVID, we have had limited participation and are looking for ways to increase involvement by both children and adults. Confirmation begins in 7th or 8th grade and we are looking for ways to strengthen this program as well as retaining the youth involvement in church after confirmation. We have a variety of adult education opportunities including short term book studies and a “Get Ready” group that meets weekly focusing on that week’s scriptures.

Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

We continue to work on finding our footing since COVID. Finding a balance between in-person activities and keeping those choosing to stay involved remotely is challenging.

- When it comes to decision-making, how many hours are spent in meetings per month?
Each committee meets on average once a month, 1-2 hours per meeting. The Church Council meets monthly with representatives from each of the boards and committees as well as the church officers. Meetings are open to all members. We are currently looking at ways to make our decision-making process more efficient.
- Think of a time when action had to be taken quickly, for example when a crisis or disaster occurred. How was that accomplished?
There are structures in place for emergency decisions and announcements through personal contact, email, and social media.
- 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

11-YEAR REPORT

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



Church#: 863200

Assoc: 828

Schedule: 0

First Congregational Church UCC

Wisconsin Rapids

WI

54494

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	606	154	54	0	0	7	16	11	-20
2011	606	154	48	8	2	7	10	7	0
2012	598	147	39	0	0	10	11	6	-7
2013	568	145	32	8	5	0	12	32	-30
2014	419	130	14	0	0	5	17	138	-149
2015	388	114	19	11	0	2	13	61	-61
2016	358	99	22	0	0	0	17	11	-28
2017	321	116	22	3	0	5	7	34	-33
2018	320	106	63	4	2	2	5	5	-2
2019	305	103	61	3	0	0	11	7	-15
2020	298	94	28	0	0	0	9	1	-10

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	\$354,519	\$0	\$39,000	\$12,106	\$51,106	\$23,540	\$74,646	11.00	\$429,265	\$171,025
2011	\$354,296	\$0	\$39,000	\$16,080	\$55,080	\$30,573	\$85,653	11.01	\$439,949	\$167,321
2012	\$431,872	\$0	\$30,000	\$4,759	\$34,759	\$37,950	\$72,709	6.95	\$504,581	\$161,407
2013	\$223,331	\$0	\$25,000	\$11,880	\$36,880	\$28,221	\$65,101	11.19	\$288,432	\$161,157
2014	\$221,254	\$0	\$27,000	\$42,665	\$69,665	\$17,594	\$87,259	12.20	\$308,513	\$337,743
2015	\$439,661	\$0	\$27,000	\$36,412	\$63,412	\$25,265	\$88,677	6.14	\$528,338	\$124,874
2016	\$291,849	\$0	\$29,000	\$10,026	\$39,026	\$20,095	\$59,121	9.94	\$360,970	\$107,006
2017	\$285,522	\$0	\$29,000	\$1,842	\$30,842	\$25,367	\$56,209	10.16	\$341,731	\$119,140
2018	\$249,421	\$0	\$29,000	\$16,873	\$45,873	\$11,083	\$56,956	11.63	\$306,377	\$127,500
2019	\$467,480	\$0	\$29,000	\$16,570	\$45,570	\$0	\$45,570	6.20	\$513,050	\$123,083
2020	\$387,250	\$0	\$29,000	\$6,805	\$35,805	\$25,538	\$61,343	7.49	\$448,593	\$102,855

% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	TOTAL ADDITIONS	TOTAL REMOVALS	CURR LOCAL EXPENSES	TOTAL OCWM	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
2015-2020	-22.80	-17.54	47.37	-100.00	-86.49	-11.92	-43.54	-15.09
2010-2020	-50.83	-38.96	-48.15	-100.00	-62.96	9.20	-29.94	4.50

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.

CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	297	X
Number of active non-members:	0	X
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	297	X

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	68%	X
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	8%	X
Less than 5 years:	8%	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>
41	23	23	24	28	35	24	58	87	X

** Numbers reflect possible participants. In reality, the number of participants on a weekly basis are much lower, especially since COVID.

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	12%	X
Joint household with minors:	15%	X
Single adults age 35-65:	2%	X
Joint household with no minors:	51%	X
Single adults over 65:	15%	X

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	30%	X
College:	57%	X
Graduate School:	13%	X
Specialty Training:		
Other (please specify):		

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	143	X
Adults who are retired:	132	X
Adults who are not fully employed:	8	X

Describe the range of occupations of working adults in the congregation: Education, Healthcare, Business Owners, Technology, Government, Public Servants, Retail, Accounting/Business

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? Overall white, with a small percentage of Asian.

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

We have not had a recent conversation, but feel we welcome diversity to our congregation.

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	9	Minister, or Lay Minister
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>	3	Minister
Children’s Groups or Classes	15	Board of CE
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	200	Minister

Church-wide Meals	50	Board of Fellowship
Choirs and Music Groups	7	Choir Director
Church-based Bible Study	9	Minister or Lay Minister
Communion (<i>once per month</i>)	70	Minister and Board of Worship
Community Meals		
Confirmation	5	Minister and Board of CE
Drama or Dance Program		
Funerals	4	Minister or Lay Minister
Intergenerational Groups		
Outdoor Worship (once a year)	35	Minister
Prayer or Meditation Groups	13	Lay Minister, Office Staff, Minister
Public Advocacy Work	5	Publicity Committee, Minister, Office Staff
Retreats	14	Other Staff
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community		
Weddings (<i>number last year</i>)	2	Minister or Lay Minister
Worship (time slot: 9:30-10:30)	70	Minister, Lay Minister, Other Staff
Worship (time slot: _____)		
Young Adult Groups or Classes		
Youth Groups or Classes	15	Youth Director, Minister, Board of CE
Other		

Additional comments:

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)
Sue Stein	3	Church	Lay Minister	N
Jake Close	No	Church	Pastor Emeritus	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:

Jake Close; participates in worship as a parishioner and social opportunities such as After worship Fellowship, church picnics, etc.

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
Secretary	Staff	Full-time	Minister	16 years
Treasurer	Staff	Part-time	Finance and Stewardship	17 years
Financial Secretary	Staff	Part-time	Finance and Stewardship	1 year
Nursery Attendant	Staff	Part-time	Board of CE	6 years
Authorized Lay Minister	Staff	Part-time	Minister	11 years
Choir Director	Staff	Part-time	Minister	18 years
Organist (2)	Staff	Part-time	Minister	7 years

Bell Choir Director	Staff	Part-time	Minister	7 years
Youth Director	Staff	Part-time	Board of CE/Minister	3 years
Interim Minister	Head	Full-time	Personnel Committee	7 months

REFLECTION

Current staff supports the goals and mission of the church.

CHURCH FINANCES

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

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$112,000
Endowment Proceeds (<i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i>)	\$179,000
Endowment Draw (<i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, "drawing down the principal"</i>)	As may be needed
Fundraising Events	\$2100
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$3055
Grants	N/A
Rentals of Church Building	\$650
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$800
Support from Related Organizations (<i>e.g. Women's Group</i>)	\$3900
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$155,000
Other (specify):	\$
Other (specify):	\$
TOTAL	\$454,000

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year): \$412,000

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH - 2023 BUDGET

INCOME	2021 ACTUAL	2022 BUDGETED	2023 PROPOSED
FCC McMillan	30,000	29,254	30,000
Ameriprise	87,626.76	92,430.00	80,400
George McMillan Pledge	176,804.00	179,526.00	180,000
Woodtrust	0	16,843	9,700
Pledge & Plate	117,738.98	100,000.00	113,424
Memorial	3,055	0	0
TOTAL	\$415,224.74	\$418,053.00	\$413,523.90

EXPENSES	2021 ACTUAL	2022 BUDGETED	2023 PROPOSED
ADMIN	16,669.10	13,674	16,400
CHRISTIAN ED	7,472.57	12,500	12,000
FELLOWSHIP	809.01	3,600	2,600
OUTREACH	26,113.10	48,000	54,000
PLANT OPERATIONS	188,620.19	89,290	99,750
WORSHIP	11,854.75	15,850	5,550
MEMBERSHIP	283.88	800	2,300
EMPLOYMENT	116,958.13	166,914	169,389
MISSION OUTREACH	30,372.50	30,500	0
PAYROLL TAXES	5,026.40	8,933	8,933
PARISH MINISTRY	37,360.44	44,800	40,975
TOTAL	\$ 441,540.07	434,861	\$411,897.00

Income OVER Expenses: \$1,626.90

Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support. What is the percentage? Salary and benefits, 19%. We also provide a parsonage with a yearly value of approximately \$30,000 which includes utilities and maintenance.

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*)

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

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered? If calculated as a percentage of operating budget, what is that percentage? Budget 6.7%

What is the church's current indebtedness?

Total amount of loan debt: None

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. N/A

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

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
2021	Solar panel project	\$10,000	\$13,150	Solar panels produce about 20% of electrical use.
		\$	\$	

If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe:

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
N/A		\$	\$	
		\$	\$	

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

Encourage the use of renewable energy as recommended by the General Synod by the Church and its members.

Does your church have an endowment?

Yes, we have 2 endowment funds. One can only be used to support the Education Wing and one we can only use the income produced and not any of the principal.

What is the market value of the assets? \$5,616,000

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

See above. One as needed and one as to what income is produced.

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

3.5% to 4.5%. Similar to previous years.

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

We fund approximately 50% of our budget through a draw from our endowment funds.

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

Many years.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

Both endowment funds are invested through an investment company and values fluctuate with investment strategy.

Other Assets

Reserves (savings): \$343,000

Investments (other than endowment): \$1,465,000

Does your church have a parsonage?

Fair market rental value of the parsonage: \$1000 per month

How is the parsonage used? Pastor and family residence

Street / City / State / Zip: 321 3rd St S, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494

Finished square footage: 2 story house with 2688 finished square feet

Number of Bedrooms, Number of Bathrooms: 4 bedrooms, 2.5 bathrooms

Assessed real estate value: \$250,000 - \$270,000 (no current assessment)

Available for minister residence: Yes

Expected minister residence: Yes

Condition of structure, systems, and appliances Modern in good repair

Entity in the church responsible for review and needed repairs: Board of Building and Grounds

Describe all buildings owned by the church: Manse and Church proper

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

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs? The church proper on all levels.

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

We made a budget change when our major endowment fund made less money due to low interest rates and recession. The budgeting process is done by boards submitting budgets and reviewed yearly based off projected income.

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.

On September 26, 2014, our congregation favorably voted to become an ONA church. Within the last five years an active creation care team was created within our church, with one of the main projects being the solar panels. Our church has increased the use of technology as well as updated some current systems.

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.

We recognize that conflict is a part of community. We do our best to resolve conflict, but know we will not always reach consensus on all issues. The Church Council has developed and instituted a conflict resolution policy. No one since its implementation has chosen to utilize the conflict procedure.

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

Staff member's name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Reverend Jake Close	10	Y
Reverends Paul & Wanda Veldman	5	Y

Reverend Paul Veldman	6	Y
Reverend Missy Miller	5	Y

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?

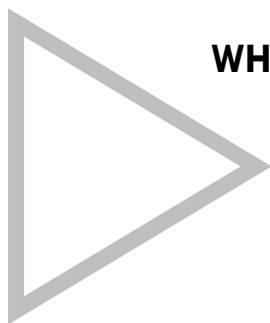
Yes, this was due to a conflict of personalities. We have worked through issues and relationships with pastoral leaders and have grown in important ways. We have a pastoral relations committee established to promote a healthy, harmonious, and fruitful relationship between the congregation and minister.

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



WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

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

COMMUNITY VISION

MISSION InSite

COMMUNITY VISION

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

We support and participate with FOCUS, which includes a food pantry, neighborhood table, and a backpack program that provides weekend meals to children. We also support and participate in our community garden, a dance for handicapped adults, and other fund raisers and service projects that support our community. Our youth is currently focusing on raising funds for the Clean Green Action non-profit and their monarch encouragement

project. The church also puts on a large 4th of July fundraiser that supports our youth and community as well as gives us visibility. In the past we have had a strong participation in Camp AweSum.

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

We regularly send and support members to attend the Northwest Association and Wisconsin Conference events and meetings, National Youth Event, Regional Youth Event, mission trips, confirmation retreats, as well as church camps.

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

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

We have had creation justice and A2A discussions, but have not submitted to the conference for official designations. We had several sessions and learning opportunities before voting and becoming ONA. We are holding informational meetings and having discussions to be a WISE Congregation for Mental Health. We are also dementia friendly. We do a great job providing educational and informational sessions with new initiatives.

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

We have participated in several ecumenical activities with other members of our community. Some of those include Thanksgiving and Lenten services; a Christian Unity service; and a combined Outdoor service with a nearby UCC congregation and a Methodist church.

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

Our current mission states, “As a church, we strive to Reach Up in our spiritual growth, Reach out in ministry and Reach in on our faith journey.”

We look to God and our spiritual leaders to help us understand and develop our personal growth. We reach out to our local and global community through our involvement in activities such as the Neighborhood Table; Food Pantry; Community Garden; Activities for All Handicapped Citizens; and through the involvement of our Board of Outreach. We provide opportunities for the congregation to deepen their personal faith journey through educational experiences including Sunday School; Adult Book Studies; Round table discussions; and Sunday services. We are currently in the process of exploring our Mission in relation to how we may re-envision our building to support and enhance the goals identified.

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?

The Pastor is expected to be the spiritual leader of the church, providing guidance, and pastoral care as needed. Pastors have been given the freedom to participate in and be active in community and wider church activities. Pastor participates according to their personal interests without sacrificing responsibilities and duties of the church.

MISSION InSite

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

Wisconsin Rapids is a community in transition. Over the past several years, there have been economic and business challenges with the closing of portions of the local paper industry. Our area leans towards average to slightly below average economic levels and average education levels.

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?

Compared to the surrounding area, our membership appears to be slightly higher in both economic and level of completed post-secondary education.

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

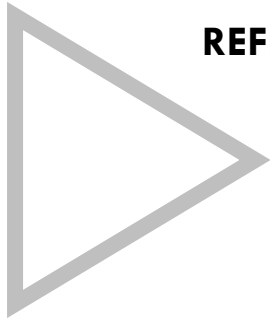
As a congregation we look to the community for opportunities to serve and support others.

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

Our church is known in the community for its openness and welcoming attitude. Many organizations have used our church as a resource both in building use and financial support. The term used by some in the community is that we are the “rich” church. This is a reflection of our financial stability.

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

While people have recognized an open and welcoming church family, we struggle with the lack of younger adults and families in church on a consistent basis.



REFERENCES

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

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

REFERENCE 1

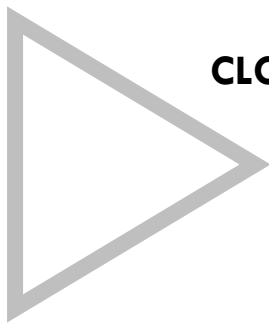
Jo Yeske
Licensed Professional Counselor, Clinical Services
715 459-2464, herkimer52@gmail.com

REFERENCE 2

Sam Dunaiki
Executive Director RENEW Wisconsin
608 255-4044, renewwisconsin.org
Solar Panel Project

REFERENCE 3

Mary Schultz
FOCUS organization
608 609-6271, schultzmf1@gmail.com
Community outreach program



CLOSING THOUGHTS

CLOSING PRAYER

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION VALIDATION

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your guiding presence as we worked on our profile. You know the strengths and weaknesses of our congregation. We pray that you continue to guide us to our next minister. Let this profile show that we are a generous and caring congregation.

We ask that you be also with that person on their own personal journey. May they find relaxation and quiet solitude in the natural resources available in our area.

May we continue to learn new ways to grow and serve you, under the leadership of the person you have chosen for us. In this we pray, Amen.

This is the Day of New Beginnings:

This is a day of new beginnings,
time to remember, and move on,
time to believe what love is bringing,
laying to rest the pain that's gone.

For by the life and death of Jesus,
love's mighty Spirit, now as then,
can make for us a world of difference
as faith and hope are born again.

Then let us, with the Spirit's daring,
step from the past, and leave behind
our disappointment, guilt and grieving,
seeking new paths, and sure to find.

In faith we'll gather round the table
to show and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings.
our God is making all things new.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

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

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

1. Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile?
Volunteer Search Committee
2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

Signed:



Christopher Weinhold
Search Committee Chair
March 27, 2023

VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

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

Staff Comment:

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

Staff Comment:

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

Staff Comment:

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature:



Name / Title: Rev. Michael Jones/Associate Conference Minister
Email: mjones@wcucc.org
Phone: 608-419-7509
Date: March 29, 2023

**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

Name: Jo Yeske-Bishop

Position: Licensed Professional Counselor

Setting: Clinical Services

Telephone: (715) 459-2464 (cell)
(715) 423-1985 (home)

Email: herkimer52@gmail.com

Relationship to congregation:

- Participated in several adult education class pre-Covid (Living the Questions was awesome!)
- When my partner and I were asked to provide some insight into religion and same-sex relationships, we met with interested people after worship one Sunday to provide our perspective;
- Participated in Unwrapping Your Gifts (probably 11-12 years ago).
- Participated in the Makers' Retreat (October 2022)
- Have attending some social functions (movie night);
- I have several solid, wonderful relationships with a number of your congregants

Describe some areas of strengths in church ministry.

I've always felt welcomed whenever I had any contact with people from this congregation. My sense is that this community of believers truly wants to embody the teachings of Jesus in that welcoming presence and in the programs it offers. The programs offered by this community are quality programs allowing for honest input and great discussion. One of the interesting, wonderful things is that these offering are not only for members of the congregation; any interested pilgrim are welcome to join in!

I am aware that there are other ministries in which this congregation participates including working to reduce human suffering by visiting those in need (e.g. lonely, sick, grieving), joining together to help reduce community (and ultimately, world) hunger, and managing the food pantry. The biggest thing for all of these areas is that people are welcomed into participating – a big plus for me!

Describe areas of improvement in this church's ministry.

Although I'm sure there are areas in which the church can improve. Because I'm not an active member of the community, there really isn't much information I can provide in this area other than keep doing what you've been doing!

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

I was raised in the Catholic church and have considered myself to be a recovering Catholic for the past 20+. In fact, I am somewhat allergic to organized religion and do not attend church on any kind of ongoing basis on purpose. However, the welcoming, encouraging, and accepting nature of the programs in which I participated have caused me to continue to grow into a deeper

relationship with God and has broadened and strengthened my commitment to minister to those with whom I come in contact. Having left the church in which I was raised and being in a long-term (37 years and counting!) same-sex relationship had had an impact on my sense of self as a spiritual person. Was I good enough? Did God still love me? Being welcomed and encouraged to grow by people like Linda Buchs-Hammonds, Sue Stein, Jackie Weinhold (sp?), Sharon Heckendorf, Sarajane Snyder, and Deb Fuehrer and others at this church have renewed and strengthened my belief that God does, indeed, still love me! Knowing this FACT spills out into my everyday life.

My experience in the *Living the Questions* class was, by far, the most significant for me. To be able to examine various aspects of spiritual life and spiritual growth in an atmosphere that validated each participant, allowing each to be who s/he is, and encouraging him/her to take what we were learning and experiencing into real life circumstances. This course had a tremendous impact on me that continues to this day.

Anything else you wish to share

Keep on welcoming and validating and encouraging! You are a powerful presence in today's world.

It was an honor for me to participate in this process. Thank you!



March 24, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of RENEW Wisconsin, I am writing in support of the members of First Congregational Church – UCC in Wisconsin Rapids, WI. I have known members of this congregation for some time, and I can say that they are exemplary members of the community.

My first interaction with the congregation came about when they were pursuing a grant with our *Solar for Good* program for a solar energy system at the church. Their dedication to the project demonstrated that they were a caring and thoughtful congregation. This is an organization that follows up on their intentions with actionable items that genuinely help the community.

When their solar project was completed, they invited me to speak with their members about the system's many benefits. The congregation organized project leaders, donors, and church members to celebrate the installation and educate the community about solar energy. The success of this event proved the congregation's commitment and dedication to solar and bettering their community.

First Congregational Church – UCC is a truly admirable organization that anyone would be happy to be a part of, especially lead. I would be happy to discuss further and speak more about the congregation if necessary. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "SDi", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sam Dunaiki
Executive Director
RENEW Wisconsin

214 North Hamilton Street, Suite 300 • Madison, WI 53703
608.255.4044 • www.renewwisconsin.org

March 20, 2023

TO: Whom it may concern

I have been asked to supply a letter of reference for First Congregational Church to express our appreciation for all that the church has done for FOCUS. I am currently the chair of FOCUS, but have been involved since 2007 in FOCUS as well as TNT (The Neighborhood Table), The Rapids Backpack Program and SWEPS (the food pantry) prior to our merging in 2020..

First Congregational Church has been a huge supporter of all aspects of FOCUS. We can count on them for sponsoring AT LEAST two meals a year for the Meal program. They collect and donate food items for the FOCUS food pantry and provide volunteers on a regular basis to assist the pantry clients. When we have mobile food pantries, which are drive through events for approximately 1000 families, we can always count on First Congregational Church to send a multitude of volunteers for those events.

The First Congregational Church Board of Outreach has always made sure to include FOCUS in their yearly mission donations. We are blessed to have such a regular giver to our ministry.

The First Congregational Church also plays a huge role in the Toys for Tots program and the Holiday Food basket program in December providing us with volunteers to pull off both events.

Empty Bowls is another aspect involving FOCUS that the First Congregational Church has also been involved in. Not only does Don Mand play a huge role as a member of the planning team of Empty Bowls, but the church provides us with volunteers the day of the event and raffle baskets for the raffle part of the event.

As you can clearly see, the First Congregational Church is a huge supporter of FOCUS but, more than that, they are a huge part of mission aspects in our community. In order to reach those in need in our community we need funds, we need volunteers and we need consistent support. We have all of those from the First Congregational Church.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 608-609-6271 or email me at schultzmf1@gmail.com.