

Search and Call Tools for Congregations

Advancing the Spirit's guidance into God's future

INTRODUCING THE NEW LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

Who
are
we

Who
is our
neighbor

Who is
God
calling us
to become

?

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

MINISTERIAL EXCELLENCE,
SUPPORT & AUTHORIZATION

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

Fort Myers United Church of Christ
8210 College Parkway
Fort Myers, FL 33919

Pastor

Florida UCC Conference

July 2023

LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE CONTENTS

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

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

INSTRUCTIONS

The new Local Church Profile supports the calling and discernment of United Church of Christ congregations with their current or future pastoral leadership.

For many congregations, the interim time between ministers is an intentional season that is guided in part by the preparation of a Local Church Profile. Using the Profile, the church can discover its data and express its story for the reliable discernment of a search committee and the beginning of a new pastorate. Searching ministers will want to see this document in its entirety.

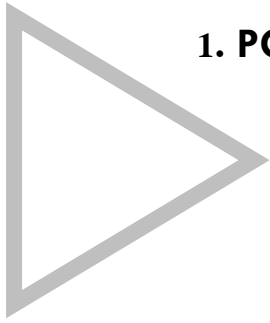
The interim season is not the only time in a church's life when it's valuable to give attention to explore a congregation's vocation. Three sections of the Local Church Profile – **WHO ARE WE NOW**, **WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR**, and **WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME** – are meant to be updated every 3-5 years. Known together as the “Discovery Document,” these three sections can be completed by a visioning group, a governing body, a transition team, or other group – not just the search committee – in order to draw forward the gifts and imaginative possibilities of a congregation. The church's engagement with the “Discovery Document” might not have the same sequence as the completed Local Church Profile that is read by candidates.

Some questions are easy to answer. Some are not so easy. Prompts are provided to stimulate narrative response if needed; these italicized prompts are merely examples from which to choose or to inspire your own. Efforts to answer the questions will prompt conversations and explorations and story-tellings and many prayers. As the Spirit moves throughout the process, congregations will shape a collective articulation of Christ's leading (**WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME**). This last question to be answered becomes the first section to be read by searching ministers in the Local Church Profile, and it is boldest and most actionable piece for faithful leadership into the future.

Your conference can provide materials referenced in the Local Church Profile, such as the 11-Year Report containing data as reported by your congregation annually to the UCC Data Hub, and MissionInsite reports containing demographic information on your community. More information on types of pastorate in the United Church of Christ can be found in the Call Agreement Workbook. Be sure to use the Call Agreement Workbook's Scope of Work to describe in this Local Church Profile the position being sought.

When it is time for ministerial search, the conference can counsel you on posting the Local Church Profile together with your public listing at UCC Ministry Opportunities (<http://oppsearch.ucc.org>).

The last page of the Local Church Profile contains a statement that parallels the consent statement signed by ministers in the UCC Ministerial Profile. In keeping with the covenantal relationship between a church and those it seeks to call, this statement encourages an open, honest exchange of information. On behalf of the United Church of Christ, and on the basis of the best knowledge available to them, your conference staff will validate your completed Local Church Profile when it is ready to be shared in relationship with prospective new leaders.



1. POSITION POSTING

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

1a. LISTING INFORMATION

Church name: Fort Myers United Church of Christ

Street address: 8210 College Parkway, Fort Myers 33919

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

<https://fmucc.org/>

<https://www.youtube.com/@FmcuccOrg/featured>

Conference: Florida Conference UCC

Association: None

UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person:

Reverend S. LaTrell Harrison, Associate Conference Minister

Cell: (404) 734-4985 Email: Lharrison@uccfla.org

Summary Ministry Description:

We are the only UCC church serving the sunny Fort Myers area and one of the only ONA churches around. Ministry impact and growth potential awaits our new settled minister. We revised our bylaws so we could function with greater agility, and we have developed a strategic plan with new mission, vision, and values that we rally behind. Covid-19 was hard on us, as was the 2022 hurricane, but we are energized, growing, and looking for a minister who is ready to implement our strategic plan, invest in us and the community for the long term, and who seeks a church where love abounds. We are invested in justice ministries, fully committed to our ONA status, and seek to widen the welcome and enlarge the neighborhood so that all may know the extravagant welcome of God. Churches must adapt to remain relevant to our modern world, and we want to play a positive role in this regard. We recognize the role of technology and seek to be a technology-proficient church. What motivates us, however, is the great welcome of God toward all. We seek to become the caring hands and feet of a still-speaking God in the modern world. If you want to make a difference in this world with an intergenerational group of people ready and willing to love, learn, share, and serve, then we would like to hear from you.

Photographs:



What we value about living in our area:

It doesn't get any better than South Florida. Sunshine, beaches, arts, great food, diversity, education, tourism, growing population, huge ministry opportunities, sports, fishing, wildlife, and the list could go on.

Current size of membership: 169

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

Position Title: Pastor

Position Duration: Settled

Compensation Level: Full Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines? Yes

1b. SCOPE OF WORK

Full time Pastoral Position

- **Prepare and lead inspiring Sunday worship**
- **Present sermons with relevant and inspiring messages**
- **Provide faith formation opportunities**
- **Develop leaders and encourage volunteers within the faith community**
- **Provide pastoral care and home and hospital visitations**
- **Embrace the surrounding community enabling the church to be a visible entity**

- **Plan and provide leadership for weddings and funerals for the worshipping community**
- **Embrace and assist in the implementation of the strategic plan**
- **Participate in wider church activities and develop strong connection to FL Conference, the denomination, and the identity of the UCC**
- **Attend council meetings**
- **Attend team meetings when requested and work collaboratively with the teams**
- **Assist in financial matters and stewardship programs of the church**
- **Provide pastoral counseling and appropriate referral if needed**
- **Provide continuous faith formation and spiritual growth opportunities for congregation**
- **Develop strong relational ministry among worshipping community**
- **Embrace the outreach/mission programs**

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.)

Preaching Competence: Apply inspiring Scriptural lessons to everyday life

Leadership: Lead with collaboration and a servant's heart

Relational Focus/High Emotional Intelligence:

1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

Compensation:

Please see the Florida Conference guidelines. Compensation will vary.

Benefits:

Salary plus Benefits

What is the expected living situation for your next minister:

Housing allowance is provided.

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

The pastor is expected to live in the Fort Myers area.

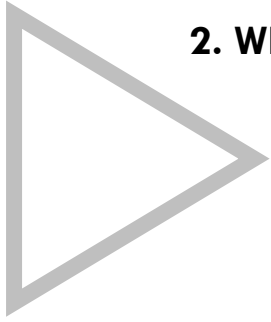
1d. WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?

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

We have developed a strategic plan that needs to be implemented, which will be provided upon request. This plan was developed with congregational input and support. The pastor is expected to fully support this plan and lead in its implementation.

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

The pastor should be proficient in English. Fluency in other languages would be a benefit but is not necessary or required.



2. WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME?

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

We affirm and embrace the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith.

Who is God calling you to become as a congregation?

Our mission:

United in love.

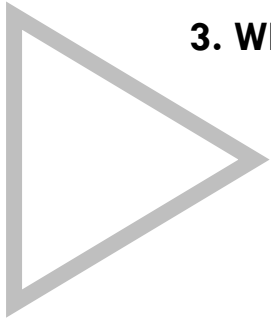
Created to serve.

Committed to welcoming all, loving all, and seeking justice for all.

Our vision: Changing lives through loving, learning, sharing, and serving God and others

Our core values:

- We value You
- We value Love
- We value Inclusion
- We value Unity
- We value Relevant Faith
- We value a Living Faith
- We value Faith Journeys
- We value Engaged Worship
- We value Justice
- We value Joyful Service



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.

Please refer to our core values listed in the previous section. Our members are expected to attend services of worship regularly, support this church and its benevolences financially, participate in the Sacraments, and evidence in their daily lives a Christian lifestyle.

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

- Eager to revitalize our church: we have a strategic plan which we are excited to implement
- Diversity: we have people from all walks of life, and many transplants with different experiences
- Value mission and justice: we are an open and affirming (ONA) congregation

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

- *We have a blend of traditional and progressive services with blended music.*
- *Engaged worship with active participation of the congregation.*
- *“Our faith is 2000 years old, our thinking is not! God is still speaking.”*

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

- *Faith formation classes for children and youth*
- *GROW classes*
- *Bible study*
- *We are looking to revitalize programs including workshops and retreats*

3b. 11-YEAR REPORT

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

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



Church#: 120135
 Assoc: 182 Schedule: 0 Fort Myers Congregational UCC Fort Myers FL 33919

YEAR	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	CONFIRMATION	CONFESSION	TRANSFER OR REAFFIRM	DEATHS OR TRANS OUT	OTHER LOSSES	NET MEMBS ADDS-REMOVED
2012	294	200	61	0	0	23	20	12	-9
2013	291	168	34	0	0	22	15	10	-3
2014	284	164	34	2	0	13	18	4	-7
2015	257	158	36	0	0	11	19	19	-27
2016	236	148	37	0	0	8	29	0	-21
2017	257	148	69	0	8	0	16	0	-8
2018	270	140	64	0	0	22	12	26	-16
2019	258	118	125	7	16	13	11	37	-12
2020	234	171	59	0	6	0	5	25	-24
2021	169	151	15	0	5	2	5	67	-65
2022	169	151	15	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
2012	\$303,621	\$0	\$6,000	\$15,078	\$21,078	\$12,174	\$33,252	1.98	\$336,873	\$289,815
2013	\$318,550	\$0	\$6,000	\$14,036	\$20,036	\$11,537	\$31,573	1.88	\$350,123	\$291,826
2014	\$279,133	\$0	\$6,000	\$11,665	\$17,665	\$11,094	\$28,759	2.15	\$307,892	\$279,361
2015	\$273,970	\$0	\$7,000	\$13,978	\$20,978	\$9,948	\$30,926	2.56	\$304,896	\$277,802
2016	\$299,157	\$0	\$7,200	\$12,109	\$19,309	\$8,939	\$28,248	2.41	\$327,405	\$269,561
2017	\$280,202	\$0	\$7,200	\$13,590	\$20,790	\$6,546	\$27,336	2.57	\$307,538	\$307,125
2018	\$317,284	\$0	\$7,200	\$16,228	\$23,428	\$12,730	\$36,158	2.27	\$353,442	\$247,014
2019	\$311,890	\$0	\$7,200	\$12,032	\$19,232	\$12,478	\$31,710	2.31	\$343,600	\$243,317
2020	\$289,336	\$0	\$7,200	\$4,783	\$11,983	\$12,151	\$24,134	2.49	\$313,470	\$217,127
2021	\$313,901	\$0	\$7,200	\$4,745	\$11,945	\$2,725	\$14,670	2.29	\$328,571	\$184,558
2022	\$313,901	\$0	\$6,600	\$2,310	\$8,910	\$0	\$8,910	2.10	\$322,811	\$0

% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	TOTAL ADDITIONS	TOTAL REMOVALS	CURR LOCAL EXPENSES	TOTAL OCWM	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
2017-2022	-34.24	2.03	-78.26	-100.00	-100.00	12.03	-57.14	4.97
2012-2022	-42.52	-24.50	-75.41	-100.00	-100.00	3.39	-57.73	-4.17

3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (Check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	127	√
Number of active non-members:	42	√
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	169	√

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (Check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years (2013):	92	√

Less than 10 (2012), more than 5 (2017) years:	21	√
Less than 5 (2018) years:	56	√

Number of total participants by age:

0-11	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Are these numbers an estimate? (Check if yes)
3	8	7	6	8	11	8	35	83	

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		Is this number an estimate? (Check if yes)
Single adults under 35:	22	√
Households with minors:	3	√
Single adults aged 35-65:	0	√
Joint households with no minors:	93	√
Single adults over 65:	20	√

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

		Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)
High school:	9%	√
College:	65%	√
Graduate School:	10%	√
Specialty Training:	10%	√
Other (please specify):	6%	√

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

		Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)

Adults who are employed:	75%	√
Adults who are retired:	22%	√
Adults who are not fully employed:	3%	√

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?

While our congregation is overwhelmingly white and older; we are open and welcoming to all races, lifestyles, and ethnic communities.

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	5	Christian Education
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>	1	Pastor
Children’s Groups or Classes	5	Christian Education
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	197	Deacons / Pastor / Worship Team
Church-wide Meals	20	Deacons / Women’s Group
Choirs and Music Groups	12	Choir Director
Church-based Bible Study	3	Christian Education
Communion <i>(served how often?)</i>	32 / once month	Deacons / Pastor
Community Meals	0	N/A
Confirmation <i>(number confirmed last year)</i>	0	N/A
Drama or Dance Program	10	Christian Education – annual pageant
Funerals <i>(number last year)</i>	1	Pastor / Woman’s Group
Intergenerational Groups	0	N/A
Outdoor Worship	0	N/A

Prayer or Meditation Groups	5	Deacons
Public Advocacy Work	10	LIFE
Retreats	0	N/A
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community	0	N/A
Weddings (<i>number last year</i>)	0	N/A
Worship (time slot: 10:00am)	50	Average attendance
Young Adult Groups or Classes	2	Christian Education
Youth Groups or Classes	5	Christian Education
Other	0	

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? (<i>3 or 4 or No</i>)	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired? (<i>Y or N</i>)
Rev. Dr. Terry Wise				N
Rev. Carl Richter				Y
Rev. Dr. George Peters				Y
Rev. Dr. Rodney Snedeker				Y
Rev. Thomas Brenner				Y
Rev. Earl Keirstead				Y
Rev. John Danner				Y
Rev. Nancy Rohde				Y
Rev. John Rohde				Y
Rev. Dr. Jim Boler				Y

Rev. Sandy Boler				Y
Rev. Lynn Breedy				Y
Rev. James Bowman Harris		Chaplain		N
Rev. Peter Challen		Chaplain		Y
Rev. Cliff Lawrence				Y
Rev. David Minnick				Y
Rev. Dr. Roger Martin				Y
Rev. John Pegg				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:

None of our members who are or were part of the ministry have been called pastors for our church. They serve solely as regular members 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
Laura Wonderly – Financial Coordinator	No	Part Time	Chair of Finance	4 years
Thad Goodwin - Organist	No	Part Time	Pastor	
David Lindsay – Choir Director	No	Part Time	Pastor	
Linda Fairleigh - Pianist	No	Part Time	Pastor	
Homer Sosa - Sexton	No	Part Time	Pastor	

3e. CHURCH FINANCES

Current annual income (Note: 2022 fiscal year was only for 10 months, skewing the data. These numbers are for our 2021 year)

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$176,461
Endowment Proceeds (<i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i>)	\$73,534
Endowment Draw (<i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, "drawing down the principal"</i>)	\$18,306
Fundraising Events	\$
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$
Grants - PPP	\$42,802
Rentals of Church Building	\$920
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$
Support from Related Organizations (<i>e.g. Women's Group</i>)	\$
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$
Other (specify):	\$
Other (specify):	\$
TOTAL	\$312,023

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for 2021): \$313,851

Attach most recent church budget, spending plan, operating statement, or annual treasurer's report as shared publicly with the congregation, or – if your church does not pass an annual budget – list current budgeted expenses here.

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

33%

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%*)

What is the church’s current indebtedness?

- Total amount of loan debt: \$40,000
- Reason for debt: Remaining debt for new roof
- 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.

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

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
2021	Partial roof	\$90,000	\$50,000	
		\$	\$	

If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe:

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
		\$	\$	
		\$	\$	

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

Does your church have an endowment? Yes

What is the market value of the assets? \$779,773 (in 2021)

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

What is the percentage rate of draw (last year, compared to 5 years ago)? 10% of three year average, compared to 7% of three year average (5 years ago)

Describe draw on endowment, if any, to meet operating budget expenses for the most recent year: \$18,306

At the current rate of draw, how long might the endowment last? 10 years

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates: These numbers are based off 2021 numbers for 12 months, as our 2022 year was only for 10 months.

Other Assets

Reserves (savings): N/A

Investments (other than endowment): N/A

Does your church have a parsonage? No

Describe all buildings owned by the church: Church facility itself

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

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs? Worship Space and Fellowship Space

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

Our church, like many others, suffered from lower attendance and financial contributions due to COVID. We also lost part of our roof to Hurricane Irma in 2017, and had to deal with Hurricane Ian in 2022, which caused temporary closure and damages. Our

investments over the past year were good, and we hope that with our new strategic plan we will see increases in attendance and financial contributions going forward.

3f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Name 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.

COVID

Hurricanes

Succession of Interim Pastors

Open and Affirming (ONA)

LIFE – Lee InterFaith for Empowerment

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

During COVID, we closed our church to public services and transferred to an entirely online model between March 2020 and August 2021, and briefly closed again for three weeks in January 2022 during the Omicron surge. Thankfully we were able to provide services via livestreams and recordings on YouTube during this time, due to an investment in technology earlier in 2019. We have struggled to rebuild our congregational numbers since reopening, but a congregation-wide meeting led to the unanimous decision to rededicate ourselves to revitalize the church, which kicked off and inspired our strategic plan.

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. Terry Wise (Interim)	2022-Current	Y
Rev. Sarah LaTrell Harrison (Interim)	2022	Y
Rev. David Bucey (Settled)	2017-2022	Y
Rev. Ellen Palmer-Marsey (Bridge) & Rev. Dr. Jean Simpson (Bridge)	2016-2017	
Rev. Dr. Anton DeWet (Interim)	2015-2016	

Rev. Earl Keirstead (Interim)	2015	
Rev. Gregory Smith (Interim)	2015	
Rev. Phillip White	2007-2014	
Rev. Stan Possell	2003-2007	
Rev. C Alan Hogle	1997-2003	
Rev. Herbert Barnum Perry	1995-1997	
Rev. Merlin Batt	1994-2002	
Rev. Harold Simones	1988-1992	
Rev. Edward Kohlmann	1982-1993	
Rev. James Atchison	1976-1982	

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

After surveying former members, we found that many were more comfortable with leaving rather than addressing conflict with a pastor. We emphasized a relational-focus and high emotional intelligence as core competencies in our new pastor primarily so that congregants feel comfortable and encouraged to bring up issues or concerns.

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

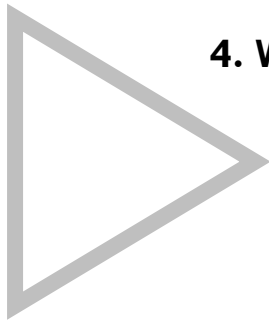
No

Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?

No

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

No



4. WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

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

- a. COMMUNITY VISION
- b. MISSION InSite

4a. COMMUNITY VISION

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

- *LIFE*
- *Social Justice*
- *Coalition of Immokalee Workers*
- *ONA*

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

We have a strong connection to the Florida Conference and the General Synod. We have a strong denominational identity.

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

- LIFE
- Food pantry of SW Florida,
- Annual meetings of the Florida Conference

4b. MISSION InSite

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

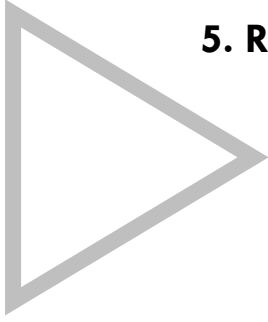
We are looking at widening our welcome and enlarging our neighborhood. Our area has many retirees, who are already well represented in our congregation, but also diverse families and working professionals who we’d like to welcome into the church.

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

We are well known for our participation in LIFE – Lee Interfaith For Empowerment – A group of congregations dedicated to making real changes for residents of Lee County, including affordable housing, poverty, children’s services, and other justice-related issues.

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

“The welcome and acceptance brought me here.”



5. REFERENCES

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

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

REFERENCE 1

Jeff Trout

239-691-2855 / TroutJeff57@gmail.com / Former Moderator

REFERENCE 2

Dr. Greg Smith

940-465-8770 / greg@sowhatfaith.com / Former Interim Pastor

PROMPTS FOR REFERENCES

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

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

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

Anything else you wish to share.

Reference 1: Jeff Trout
Former Moderator
TroutJeff57@gmail.com
239-691-2855

As a former moderator at Fort Myers Congregational United Church of Christ, I can speak to numerous strengths of the congregation.

STRENGTHS

First and foremost, it is a place where anyone can feel welcome and safe. My partner, Joe, and I joined the church about halfway through the church's Open and Affirming process. The fact they wanted to go ON RECORD as being welcoming to the LGBTQ community was very important to us. I can gladly say the day of the annual meeting when the issue was voted on and overwhelmingly accepted was a very emotional day. A couple years later, Joe and I would become the first same-sex couple to be married there with a large number of the congregation in attendance.

Another strength of the church is its involvement in the community. While a member, I was proud to be the chair of the Mission Board. We worked with a local Faith-based homeless organization that prepared and served meals to the area's homeless population.

The congregation was also involved with a multi-denomination organization known as LIFE (Lee InterFaith for Empowerment) that tackles social issues such as affordable housing, affordable child care, and criminal justice reform.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

As a former moderator, I can say the most difficult task was getting the congregation to become involved in the boards and committees. It seemed at times as though the same group of people rotated among the various boards and committees until they experienced "burnout" and would then move on to a new duty.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES

As I mentioned earlier, the most significant experience I had was being the first same-sex couple to be married at FMCUCC. In fact, we were the first of six same-sex couples to be married in 2015. Prior to this, it had been several years since there had been any weddings.

Also, I began my term as moderator just as the COVID-19 pandemic became a serious threat to life.

As a congregation with many older members with serious health issues, we made the very difficult decision to close the church building FOR ANY AND ALL services and gatherings. Services were broadcast livestream every Sunday morning and were made available on the church website for later viewing, as well.

All board and committee meetings were online via Skype. As a matter of fact, at the end of my term as moderator, we held the Annual Meeting via Skype.

It was a very difficult time, but everyone was flexible and we made it work.

Even though I've moved away from the Fort Myers and Lee County areas, I am proud of the FMCUCC Church and its congregation. I highly recommend it to anyone contemplating getting involved with these wonderful and kindhearted people.

Respectfully,
Jeff Trout

Reference 2: Dr. Greg Smith
Executive Director, White Rock Center of Hope (Dallas, TX)
Founder, So What Faith
greg@sowhatfaith.com
940-465-8870

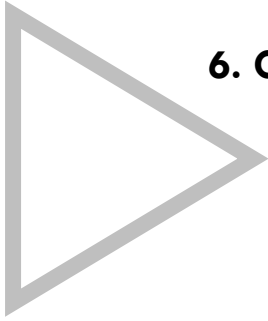
Q1: Fort Myers Congregational UCC is a traditional congregation blessed with strong lay leadership and an abundance of retired clergy. A higher than average percentage of year-round members and friends are actively involved in one or more ministries.

Q2: Like many Mainline Protestant congregations, FMCUCC has experienced considerable numeric decline in membership, attendance, and financial resources. During my time in this congregation there were numerous conversations about options and changes that might lead to a more sustainable future, but no focused strategic plan or other guiding norms were adopted at the time.

Q3. My most significant experience was shepherding the congregation's appreciative inquiry-drive exploration of who they understand themselves to be and discerning the future to which God was calling them. This extended process was notable for several reasons, including its intentional involvements of the whole congregation and the energy and clarity that resulted.

Q4. I was blessed to spend nine months as the congregation's Interim Pastor in 2015. Throughout my experience I found newcomers and long-time participants and members to be warm, generous, and largely receptive to trying new things.

Peace,
Greg



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:

“... That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

- John 17:21

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?”

- Micah 6:8

6b. 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? (*for example, church council or consistory, transition team, etc.*)

Our Search and Call Committee contributed to this Local Church Profile, chaired by Carolyn Martin. Our former interim Pastor, Reverend S. LaTrell Harrison, is our direct point of contact for all inquiries about the profile.

Signed:

Name / Title / Date:

6c. VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

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

Staff Comment: True

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

Staff Comment: True

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

Staff Comment: True

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature: *Rev. LaTrell Harrison*

Name / Title: Rev. LaTrell Harrison

Email: LHarrison@uccfla.org

Phone: 404-734-4986

Date: 10/17/2023

**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