



First Congregational Church Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901

PASTOR-FULL-TIME

APRIL 2024



Local Church Profile Contents



Position Posting



Who Is God Calling Us to Become?



Who Are We Now?



Who Is Our Neighbor?



References



Consent and Validation

"God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work." NRSV 2 Corinthians 9:8



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OSITION POSTING

- Listing Information
- Scope of Work
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- Who is God Calling to Minister with Us?

Listing Information

Church name: First Congregational Church
Street address: 137 Algoma Blvd. Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901
Website: <http://www.fccoshkosh.org/>

Conference: Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ
Association: Northeast Association

UCC Conference Contact Person:

Rev. Jane B. Anderson,
Associate Conference Minister
Wisconsin Conference UCC
W1000 Spring Grove Rd
Ripon, WI 54971
920-540-2586
janderson@wcucc.org



Summary Ministry Description:

First Congregational Church is seeking a vibrant, authentic, and personable Pastor who will connect with our faith community through relatable preaching and compassionate care. FCC is known for its insightful and inclusive theology, generosity, a welcoming spirit, and appreciation for music in worship. Sharing our worship space with the community for musical events has been a long-time tradition. Exploring new musical opportunities in worship and for the community’s enjoyment will continue to inspire us.

We seek someone who will join with us in living out our faith through service and collaboration in the wider community. Development of new missions arises from our Mission Ministries partnerships. Examples of newly planned missions are those aimed at food insecurity and restoration of the tree canopy in several of our local parks. These new missions connect with our interests and work helping the unhoused population, feeding the hungry, caring for all creation, and supporting mental health services. Our Creator has dreams for us that we have not yet realized, and we look forward to discovering them. Embracing the ideas that unfold, and with the leadership of a new Pastor, we hope to attract new members to walk with us as we journey together. We seek to elevate our presence in the Oshkosh area and in the world through our work as a dynamic community of faith that appreciates care for all people and for all creation.

As we celebrate our 175-year history, we will look to our new Pastor to enliven us with generous spirits to express gratitude to God for all we have been given. We aspire to strengthen our foundation in order to continue to support our worship, youth education, faith formation, music, missions, and staff development. We are prayerfully searching for a Pastor who, with the Holy Spirit, will weave us together in unity and love as we learn, serve, and grow into the future.

What we value about living in our area:



Oshkosh is a mid-sized Wisconsin city (population, about 65,000) located not far from Appleton (20 miles) and Green Bay (50 miles) to the north, Milwaukee (90 miles) to the southeast, and Madison (90 miles) to the southwest. It is a city of contrasts, with both working-class and professional communities, diverse economically and becoming more diverse culturally and racially.

Known as Event City, Oshkosh is host to numerous musical festivals and concerts. It is also home to the Experimental Aircraft Association whose annual “fly-in” convention and air show brings about 600,000 aviation enthusiasts from all over the world to Wittman Field. Also based in Oshkosh is a professional NBA G-League basketball team, the Wisconsin Herd, an affiliate of the Milwaukee Bucks.

Oshkosh straddles the Fox River with Lake Winnebago on its east side and Lake Butte des Morts to the west. This location provides for numerous recreational opportunities on the water. The weekly Farmer’s market along Main Street is rated as one of the best in Wisconsin. There is a public museum, an art center with a garden and a wonderful public library 2 blocks from the church as well as many neighborhood parks that provide for recreational opportunities.

It is a city with pride in education. The Oshkosh Area School District is considered strong and is well supported by residents. Since 2012, three referenda have passed providing funding for technology; building security and maintenance upgrades; a new Middle School that opened in Fall 2023; and a new elementary school scheduled to open in Fall 2024. In addition, the community is positively influenced by the presence of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and Fox Valley Technical College. Both schools provide opportunities for continuing education for residents.

Presently there are two hospitals in the city, with plans for a third, scheduled to open in 2025. Residents can get specialized care through three primary medical networks that serve the city.

To read more about all that Oshkosh has to offer, please visit the city's website: <https://www.ci.oshkosh.wi.us/Default.aspx>

Current size of membership:

The FCC Clerk reported in the 2023 Annual Report that there are 307 members and 110 friends at the end of 2023. Friends are people who participate in the full life of the church but have not become members.

Languages used in ministry (other than English):

English only

Position Title:

Pastor

Position Duration:

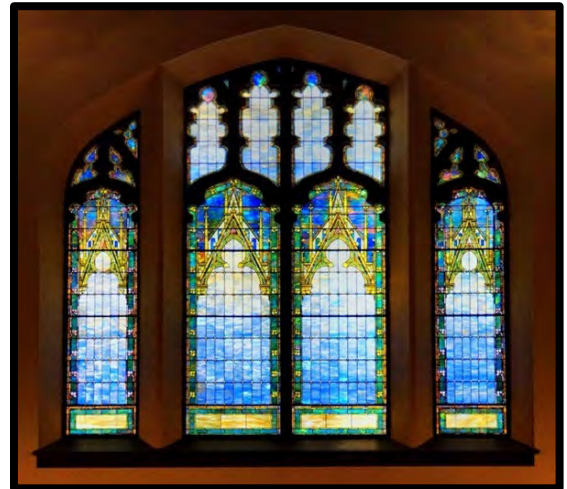
Settled – a called position intended for longer-term ministry in which the minister moves church membership to the congregation and moves standing to related association.

Compensation Level:

Full Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines?

Yes



View of Sanctuary from balcony showing the Casavant pipe organ and choir loft. All the windows in the sanctuary are Tiffany stained-glass windows. The windows are original to the building that was built in 1912.

Scope of Work

Full time Pastor Position (Primary Responsibilities)

- Responsible for preparation and leadership of Sunday Worship
 - Selecting scripture and music
 - Planning order of service and directing bulletin production
 - Coordinating music with Choir Director/Organist
- Personal growth through study and prayer to deepen spiritual connections.
- Faith formation
 - Leading confirmation.
 - Identifying resources and opportunities for lay persons to participate in.
 - Inviting new members into the church community.
- Community Engagement
 - Being an ambassador of God's love in the community.
 - Participating with church members and Ministry Groups in activities with community organizations.
 - Pursuing ecumenical collaboration
- Supervision and Staff oversight
 - Energizing staff
 - Supporting staff on goal setting and achievement
 - Active management of staff
- Conduct weddings and funerals for FCC community.
 - Being available to wider community for funerals, weddings, and special worship programs, as time allows
 - Representing FCC to local organizations, as time allows

Pastoral Care

- Visiting with those experiencing grief, preparing for surgery, or recovering from medical trauma/surgery.
- Visiting homebound individuals
- Short-term counseling and listening, referring persons to outside counseling when needed.
- Administrative Responsibilities
 - Emails, returning phone calls, social media engagement.
 - Reviewing of financial reports and documents
- Participate in wider church activities such as conference and association meetings.

Shared Responsibilities

- With Church Council's lay leaders participate in strategic planning for current and new directions in ministry
- Attend monthly Church Council Meetings
- With Office Administrator
 - Oversee church supplies,
 - Provide updates to website,
 - Publish electronic twice weekly and monthly newsletters,
 - Arrange for meeting notices.

- Assist persons coming to the church office.
- Collaborate on securing liturgist, ushers, and greeters.
- In collaboration with Finance Ministry Group
 - Oversee church finances.
 - Support yearly stewardship campaign.



Pastor's Office was updated in 2018. Unique features are the lighted Tiffany stained-glass windows and exit to the courtyard.

Core Competencies:

1. Spiritually grounded to provide worship that is insightful and authentic.
2. Compassionate and caring when relating to others.
3. Vibrant, personable, and socially engaged in working within the congregation and in the wider community.

Compensation and Support

Salary Basis:

\$52,000.00 (includes housing allowance of \$24,000) + \$10,000.00 for church participation for beginning total of \$62,000.00

FCC follows the UCC Compensation guidelines and consideration will be given for years of service.

(The cover worksheet depicting the compensation package is attached at the end of this document.)

Benefits:

- Health, dental and vision insurance
- Pension
- Financial support for continuing education time
- Vacation
- Sick leave
- Holidays
- Personal days
- Life insurance and disability
- Sabbatical – Ordained staff members are eligible for a sabbatical leave after five (5) years of continuous service at FCC.

What is the expected living situation for your next minister?

No parsonage is provided. A housing allowance is part of the compensation package. Living within a 30-minute commute to the church is expected.

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

- Community of Practice (Peer Groups),
- Clergy Coaches
- Annual Clergy Retreat at Moon Beach Camp in St. Germain, Wisconsin
- Spiritual Directors that are available to clergy
- Opportunities for Spiritual Retreats
 - St. Norbert's (Green Bay)
 - Holy Wisdom (Madison)
- Respite opportunities at Daycholah Center in Green Lake, Wisconsin
- Wisconsin Conference programs that can be used with congregations.

There are 3 other UCC Congregations in Oshkosh. Pastors from these congregations have been available for pastoral care coverage during vacation times. Pastors from Trinity Episcopal Church (across the street from FCC) and First Presbyterian Church (one block down the street) have collaborated with the pastor at FCC to provide ecumenical services.

Who is God Calling to Minister with Us?

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



In 2021-2022, FCC engaged in a visioning process using the tool, Appreciative Inquiry. The Word Cloud below was developed using responses given to the question “Imagine the possibilities for new and enhanced ministries within this church. What are the three most compelling opportunities for connection and growth of ministries that you see; those which promise unprecedented

results for you and the congregation?”

Some of the themes that emerged regarding ministry goals are:

- Changes in music
 - different genres of music
 - use of different instrumentation and musicians
- Growing Sunday School and spiritual education opportunities for children/youth
- Improved communication within the congregation
- Supporting care of all creation
- Caring for one another
 - Visitation ministry
 - Re-invigorate a caring ministry.
 - Engage people in a prayer circle
- Growing the congregation, particularly younger families, and children
- Developing a collaborative relationship with students at UW-Oshkosh
- Developing collaborative relationships with other faith communities.
 - Faith community that is culturally different than FCC
 - Faith communities that are near FCC (e.g. Trinity Episcopal; First Presbyterian)
 - Collaborate with other UCC churches in Oshkosh (St. Paul’s; Bethany; Emmanuel)
- Engaging in social justice issues in the community through service projects
- Introducing more flexibility and creativity in worship experiences



The above-mentioned goals will take the efforts of many beyond the Pastor. We would envision our next Pastor supporting the above work, whether personally involved in the work or through support of ministry group’s or special interest group’s work on these goals.

“God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.” NRSV 2 Corinthians 9:8

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

FCC is seeking someone who is vibrant, personable, and socially engaged in working within the congregation and in the wider community. We are a congregation that likes to be involved in social action in our community, for example in the activities of The Green Team and our Social Justice Ministry Group.

It is hoped that our new Pastor will engage with the projects of these two groups. We also hope that the Pastor may inspire us and others to take on new projects that are of benefit, so that we may be leaders in service to the wider community.

Music is vitally important to us at FCC, and we continue to be a place where the community comes together to hear wonderful music. It is our hope that our new Pastor will be open to any outside groups

using our building and will extend a welcome to both musicians and the people in the community who come hear them to enjoy music in our beautiful sanctuary.

Surveys of the congregation and responses in the Appreciative Inquiry process have mentioned the possibility of building connections with students at UW-Oshkosh, the college campus that is within walking distance of FCC. Inviting students to be involved in service projects with members of the congregation would be a good way to welcome younger adults to FCC and its ministries. We hope that a new Pastor would assist in developing that connection.

FCC has many members and friends who volunteer in the community (apart from in church projects), so there is great potential to collaborate in many ways. Getting to know others through service in the wider community may be an opportunity to attract new members to FCC.

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

FCC is an open and welcoming community that uses English in its liturgy and singing. We view ourselves as progressive and more contemporary than traditional. Gender neutral language is used when possible.

Our sanctuary is equipped with a T-Coil hearing loop to accommodate those with hearing aids. Microphones are used by the Pastor, readers, and during the Children's Time so that persons with hearing impairments can make use of the T-Coil technology.

Since we are an Open and Affirming congregation, our Pastors have been called by our LGBTQ+ siblings to perform marriages and commitment ceremonies. We would expect this to continue. As a congregation we are respectful in using people's preferred pronouns.

To welcome all, we are sensitive to the dietary needs of others. Gluten-free bread and grape juice is served for communion. During Sunday fellowship and church functions where food is served, vegetarian options are available and items with nuts are marked as such.

We are a congregation that recognizes differences in people. To extend our welcome to all we understand that we must be flexible in accommodating others and their needs. We learn by being free to question, hoping to do so with grace and a sense of humor.

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.

EXHIBITING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION AND ONGOING SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

- Loving God, following Jesus Christ, and being guided by the Holy Spirit, living a life of discipleship.
- Continuing discernment of one's call in the community.
- Exhibiting a commitment to lifelong spiritual development and faithful personal stewardship.

CARING FOR ALL CREATION

- Maintaining a basic understanding of mental health and wellness.
- Practicing self-care and life balance.
- Providing hope and healing to a hurting world.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE AND MERCY

- Practicing the radical hospitality of God.
- Understanding community context and navigating change with a community.
- Engaging in mission and outreach.
- Building relationships of mutual trust and interdependence.

ENGAGING SACRED STORIES AND TRADITIONS

- Maturing in effective proclamation and preaching.
- Bringing life to sacred stories and traditions in worship, proclamation, and witness.
- Leading faith formation effectively across generations.

STRENGTHENING INTER- AND INTRA- PERSONAL ASSETS

- Exhibiting strong moral character and personal integrity.
- Respecting the dignity of all God's people.
- Understanding and ministering to stages of human development across the life span.
- Demonstrating excellent communication skills.



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)
- You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22:39 NRSV)
- Do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8 NRSV)

Who is God calling you to become as a congregation?

Out of the Appreciative Inquiry visioning process in 2022, a Dream Statement was developed:

“Grounded in encounters with God, the Holy, and relationships with one another First Congregational will serve and share within the church and larger community.

“With doors wide open, respect for different spiritual paths, a focus on education, and a variety of music and arts, vibrant worship, an embrace for diversity, inclusive practices, and care of the earth, First Congregational Church will be a community of presence of love and generosity.”

As people in the congregation reflected on the word “community” and its meaning during the review of ministries in late Fall 2023, the top responses were:

- Connectedness experienced by working together, having trust in one another, having worship and fellowship together.
- Having common goals, passions, and values focused on the greater good for all creation in the larger community.
- Open and inclusive acceptance of all people without judgement.

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

From comments about changes in music, a 2nd Choir Director/Organist was hired. One of the things that has been implemented is an All-Church Choir. People who would like to sing on the 3rd Sunday of the month show up at the traditional Chancel Choir practice at 9:00 a.m. to rehearse the selected anthem for the service. This allows people who are unable to commit to singing with the choir each Sunday (and Wednesday choir practice) to sing with the choir. The choir sings in a space adjacent to the piano vs. the choir loft. Choir robes are not worn when the All-Church Choir sings. This has resulted in a choir that is about double the size of the Chancel Choir. Some members who have “retired” from singing in the Chancel Choir have again participated. The congregation has enjoyed this change in the choir. There is appreciation for the increased voices that are represented. With the addition of a 2nd Choir Director/Organist, it is hoped that there will be continued innovation in musical offerings.

In 2018, FCC received a large bequest following the death of a member. After some time of study, a Permanent Opportunities Fund was established that provided groups with an ability to submit grant proposals to fund projects. In 2023, the Social Justice Ministry Group submitted a grant request for the purchase of yarn for the Anti-Bullying Campaign (ABC Program) in the Oshkosh Area School District.

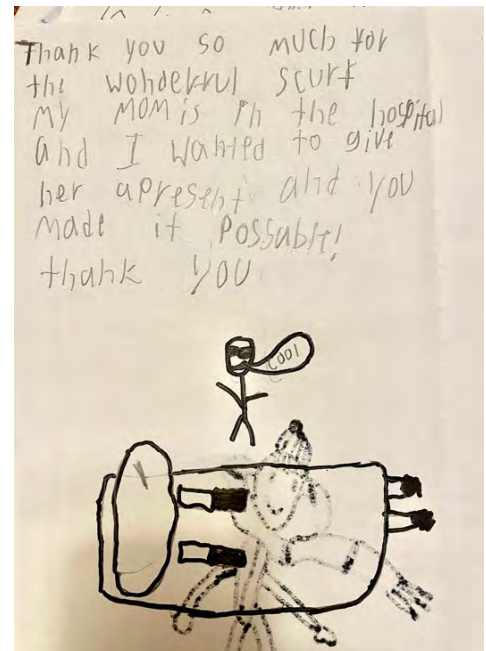


A grant of \$1500 was approved. The ABC Program has people from the FCC congregation and community members knit or crochet neck scarves that are distributed to 5th grade students who take an “anti-bullying” pledge. Over 800 scarves were made and in Fall 2023, approximately 750 scarves were delivered to public and parochial school students. Other scarves were given to the

homeless shelter for their guests. The Care Closet at the Oshkosh Public Library and the Oshkosh National Alliance for Mental Illness also received scarves for those that needed warmth in the winter.

The idea to start the ABC Program was developed several years ago by an FCC member who is a retired schoolteacher. Many of the those knitting the scarves purchased their own yarn at a cost of about \$5/skein. The grant eliminates the need for those knitting and crocheting to buy their own yarn, although some still do. Providing yarn has increased the number of community knitters and has resulted in more scarves to pass along to schools. In the past, not all schools received scarves for distribution. Now all schools can be covered. This is a wonderful collaboration between FCC, people in the community and Oshkosh Schools and several community agencies that people who are in need.

It has been gratifying to see some of the thank you notes that students have written after receiving a handmade scarf.





WHO ARE WE NOW?

- Congregational Reflections
- 11-Year Report
- Congregational Demographics
- Participation and Staffing
- Church Finances
- Historical Information

Congregational Reflections

Describe your congregation's life of faith.

At First Congregational Church in Oshkosh, our commitment to God and to each other is affirmed in our Covenant. This is recited when new members join the church and on certain other occasions:

Professing our faith in God and our discipleship to Jesus Christ, we associate ourselves together in a Christian Church.

We declare our purpose to be to discover the will of God for our lives and to mediate the spirit of Christianity and the things of God to our community, that God's will may be fulfilled in individuals and in society.

We do so covenant before God to maintain this Church, promising to attend its services, to give of our means as we are able, to receive the counsel of its ministry and to share wholeheartedly in its work. Amen.



The first banner encompasses our belief that we are still hearing God's word and still learning. The rainbow colors signify our acceptance of all and the fact that we are an Open and Affirming Church.

The "BE THE CHURCH" banner, displayed on the exterior of the church building, contains our mission: To act in our community and in the world to care for all creation. Our Green Team, Social Justice Ministry Group, and Benevolence Ministry Group are all mission-oriented and engage members and friends of the congregation in their work.

People see FCC as progressive in its theology and in its worship practices. In the liturgy, we try to use gender neutral language when referring to God. Words that are used include: God, Our Creator, Creator God, Holy One, Loving God, Mother Father God, Holy Mystery, Holy Spirit, and Holy One.

We try to be followers of Jesus and not adherents to doctrines. Everyone has their own life experiences and their own understanding of the divine. We often say, “Many paths, one journey.”

When we come together to worship and commune with the Holy Spirit in the sanctuary of the church, we are like threads with differing gifts and experiences. As the Holy Spirit moves among us, the spirit weaves us together to create a tapestry made up of our differences, holding us together in unity and in sisterly-brotherly love for each other. We become one body as the Holy One moves among us. Our love for each other is then poured out into our world to care for God’s creation.

When visitors experience our welcome for all and express a desire to join the church, they first meet with the Pastor. Then a time is planned when, as part of a worship service, they will formally join the congregation. At that time, the words of the Covenant are spoken in unison by the new members together with all the members of FCC who are present during the worship service.

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

- Accepting of all
- Future focused
- Good lay leadership
- Invested in children and youth.
- No major conflicts that are unresolved
- Resilient
- Sense of humor

From a congregational survey (with 80+ respondents), the top three qualities of our congregation noted were:

1. Active and concerned for the community.
2. Warm, personal, and welcoming
3. Cooperative and trusting.

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

Sunday morning worship at FCC begins at 10:00 a.m. (9:30 a.m. in the summer). There is a sense of community as everyone arrives, and the Narthex is filled with the sounds of people greeting one another. We are certainly not a quiet church as we gather! Ushers at the entrance to the Sanctuary provide printed bulletins with the order of worship, and activity bags for children are available in the Narthex. Announcements are projected on screens at the front of the sanctuary during the gathering time. The liturgist and scripture reader take seats in the Chancel before worship begins, and the Pastor generally walks down the center aisle to the Chancel and sits down during the Prelude. When the Prelude finishes, the Pastor stands up, greets everyone, and adds a few brief announcements.

For scripture, the Pastor most often uses the NRSV Bible in the worship service. For preaching, Rev. Nancy Taylor has used the Lectionary, whereas Revs. Carol and Ralph DiBiasio-Snyder developed themes, which created a bit more flexibility and creativity in the Order of Worship. The themes also left space for “out on a limb” sermons and sermons based on movie clips (“Reel Spirituality”). Congregants appreciate the benefits of both organizational styles. Thus we see ourselves as being flexible in worship.

Currently all worship services are live streamed with assistance from a media specialist employed by the church, with assistance from media interns. The live streams can be viewed our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@fccmediachannel4>. Services are recorded and can be viewed later.

Worship is usually held in the sanctuary. However, some special services are held in our lounge or Fellowship Hall (e.g., Ash Wednesday; pet blessings). We also try to have an outdoor service each year in one of the city parks, followed by a potluck.

Communion is provided monthly on the first Sunday of the month. On the third Sunday of each month, children and youth are involved, doing the ushering and scripture reading during worship. One Sunday a month is “Church School for All” where children stay in the Sanctuary and the entire congregation participates in the church school lesson during the Children’s Time and Sermon.

Baptisms are celebrated by the entire congregation. A pitcher of water is placed in the Narthex. As people gather, each person can add water to the vessel that will be used for the baptism. Following the baptism, the child is carried up and down the center aisle so that all can see the newest member of the church. Everyone enjoys this celebration.

A rose at the altar celebrates someone having a child or grandchild and a prayer of thanksgiving and gratitude is offered by the Pastor for the new life.



After the announcements, worship begins with ringing of our singing bowl and a child is invited forward to light the peace candle while the congregation recites a prayer in unison. This is followed by a brief time to greet one another. A liturgist leads the congregation in the Opening Words, a responsive reading, and an opening prayer, and then the Pastor invites the children forward for Children’s Time. This is led either by the Pastor or by the Director of Children and Youth Ministry. It concludes with a prayer and the children may then go to the Children’s Table at the front of the sanctuary for quiet activities while worship continues.

Following Children’s Time, the choir performs an anthem accompanied by the organ or piano. Then the scripture is read by a lay person, and this is followed by the Pastor’s Reflection or Sermon. After the sermon, there is a call for prayers, concluding with the Lord’s Prayer recited in unison by the congregation. The ushers collect the morning’s offering, the Doxology is sung as the collection is brought forward, and a Prayer of Dedication is read in unison by the congregation. The Pastor exits along the center aisle as a final hymn is sung and gives a benediction from the rear of the sanctuary. Finally, a Postlude is played on the organ or piano. Some people choose to leave the Sanctuary during the Postlude, but many remain in the pews to listen.



Music in worship is important to the congregation. Usually, two or three hymns are sung by the congregation during the worship service using the Chalice Hymnal. Hymnals are available in each pew, but the words to the hymns are also projected on the screens at the front of the Sanctuary. Singing is accompanied by the organ or piano.

The Chancel Choir has about 12 regular members and always prepares an anthem to sing during worship. However, once a month they are joined in singing the anthem by 10 or more other people from the congregation as part of the all church choir.

Occasionally special music is arranged. This may include vocal soloists; someone playing a guitar, trumpet, or other instrument; or a small group of musicians. Children and youth are always welcome to entertain the congregation with their musical abilities and this is much appreciated! Often youth will perform on Christmas Eve.



First Congregational Church has had the benefit of wonderful preaching for many years. Good preaching has been described as:

- Relatable to our daily lives
- Scripture-based
- Uplifting
- Encouraging
- Hopeful
- Upbeat
- Compassionate
- Using humor
- Motivating
- Reflective
- Animated
- Energetic
- Including personal stories.
- Easily understood.
- Joyous in celebrating God and all Creation.

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

FCC attempts to include children and youth in the full life of the church as much as possible, where it is age appropriate.

Our church school program uses the “Picture the Bible” curriculum which explores stories of the Old and New Testament and aids in the development of Biblical literacy at an age-appropriate level. It teaches children and youth how to apply the lessons to their daily lives.

Church school is somewhat flexible. Older youth can participate in church school either in person or through Zoom. If in-person learning is not possible for a family’s circumstances, resources can be provided for them to have church school lessons at home.

On one Sunday a month, youth serve as readers and ushers. There is also one Sunday a month that is “Church School for All” where all of the congregation learns the church school lesson, with the children and youth, during the worship service. Other opportunities for children and youth to participate in faith forming activities include:



- Youth teaching younger children once a month in church school.
- Serving as Sunday coordinators and technology interns.
- Providing dramatic presentations.
- Serving on the Child and Youth Ministry Group; One youth also serves as consultant on the Pastoral Search Committee.
- Serving meals at the Day-by-Day Warming Shelter; and
- Sharing musical gifts with the congregation.
- Participating in an annual mission trip during the summer, using funds they raise themselves.



Adults can continue their journey of faith formation in several activities at FCC. These include:

- Attending Lifelong Learning sessions for adults on Sunday mornings.
- Participating in one of the two Bible Study groups led by the Pastor.
- Participating in the Women's Spirituality Group that meets bi-monthly.

FCC also has a well-stocked library from which members and friends can borrow books to aid in continuing faith formation. Two lay members volunteer their time to organize the library. Faith formation is further supported through opportunities to provide service to others, share gifts of music, and participate in communal worship.

Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

Announcements, schedules for activities, and decisions are communicated in the monthly newsletter, Tidings, and in our twice weekly email newsletter, Member Bridge. Some of the decisions and activities are also in the Sunday morning announcements where they are projected on the screens prior to and after worship. More significant and time-sensitive items are announced by the Pastor as worship begins.

Our Annual Congregational meeting takes place in January. Meeting notices are mailed to members at least 14 days prior to the meeting and announced in worship for two weeks prior to the meeting.

At the annual meeting in January 2024, FCC's bylaws were amended to update our governance structure. The structure can be summarized as follows:

- The Church Council is made up of four officers and five at-large members elected by the congregation.
- The Committee structure consists of:
 - o Coordinating Ministries—seven ministries that are essential to operating the church.
 - o Mission Ministries—groups that work to live out our mission in the world.
 - o Committees and Tasks Forces—groups that have a very specific purpose within the church and/or may be time limited in the work they do.
 - o Affiliated Groups—groups that may be loosely or closely affiliated with the church but may have their own structure and/or bylaws.

For specific information about our governance structure, please refer to the bylaws that are attached at the end of the Profile.

Currently, FCC is struggling for vision in several areas. Our membership numbers have declined in recent years and post-Covid it is difficult to attract new people to our door. As a result of our declining membership numbers, and attrition experienced following Covid, there are fewer volunteers for committees and work of the church.

Declining membership has also had a negative impact on FCC's budget, a reality that plagues many churches. The Church Council and the Finance Ministry Group are working together to find solutions.

When it comes to decision-making, how many hours are spent in meetings per month?

Our Pastor spends about 16 hours/mo. in meetings that are administrative in nature. This does not include time spent leading Faith Formation groups or leading Confirmation.

Think of a time when action had to be taken quickly, for example when a crisis or disaster occurred. How was that accomplished?

Beginning in March 2020, churches were mandated to close due to Covid, but First Congregational Church was well prepared to deal with this crisis. Just prior to the pandemic, we had installed video equipment as part of a Capital Campaign, so online church services could begin right away. The Pastor preached in the sanctuary and the service was streamed live through Facebook. The Pastor was well supported in this because FCC employs a media specialist who was invaluable in figuring out the details of the streaming process.

However, other difficulties arose during the initial months of Covid, including the inability to minister to people who were hospitalized or living in nursing care. In addition, it was not possible to have services to celebrate the lives of several long-time FCC members who passed away during Covid restrictions. Nevertheless, we took the initiative later to make up for what we had missed. For example, to honor the life of a long-time member who died during the Covid shutdown, a tree was planted in his memory in April 2021 in the terrace adjacent to the church's educational wing. The Pastor gave a blessing.



Members and friends of a long-time member gather to honor him as a tree is planted in his memory on Arbor Day, 2021. Pastor Nancy Taylor blessed the tree.

Live-streamed worship services did not initially include live music, but this evolved over time. The choir (known during Covid as the “Masked Choir”) practiced in a small barn and recorded their music to share with the congregation online. Other musicians and vocalists made recordings that were shared during online services, and lighting of our peace candle was also recorded weekly for inclusion in the service.

To engage children and families in Faith Formation, the Teaching and Learning Coordinator enlisted volunteers to deliver educational materials, as well as Advent and Lenten boxes, to families with children. To celebrate youth graduating from high school, a parade of cars visited the homes of youth to extend congratulations outdoors.

Fellowship hour consisted of an online Zoom meeting following the worship service so that people could see each other and share conversation. However, it was a much smaller Fellowship group than there would have been following an in-person worship service at church.

No one could predict how long Covid restrictions and precautions would last, and for FCC, we did not gather for in-person worship services until May 2021. For the initial months of worship, there were designated places to sit to maintain safety through social distancing. Those attending services sat in pews wondering who among us was and was not vaccinated. It was a difficult time for many churches

including FCC. At first when we returned to in-person worship, Fellowship time following the service was not held.

Since Covid, FCC has continued to live-stream worship services. This has been good because we have been able to include people who are home-bound or live at a distance from Oshkosh. An unfortunate side-effect, however, is that some people have not returned to in-person worship. It is challenging to find ways to include those watching remotely in the full life of the church community.

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 (see attached bylaws)

11-Year Report

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



Church#: 862130

Assoc: 824

Schedule: 0

First Congregational UCC

Oshkosh

WI

54901

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	451	150	86	5	0	6	6	4	1
2013	460	155	95	10	0	7	8	0	9
2014	482	140	79	0	2	25	2	3	22
2015	437	132	83	7	2	9	4	59	-45
2016	451	132	75	4	3	21	7	7	14
2017	457	131	62	6	5	5	15	0	1
2018	446	118	89	4	0	7	5	17	-11
2019	433	108	56	3	0	9	10	15	-13
2020	383	105	74	5	11	0	9	0	7
2021	380	30	20	0	0	1	4	0	-3
2022	348	70	50	5	0	8	12	33	-32

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	\$323,000	\$0	\$20,805	\$1,570	\$22,375	\$26,800	\$49,175	6.44	\$372,175	\$300,000
2013	\$296,000	\$0	\$23,740	\$1,683	\$25,423	\$20,000	\$45,423	8.02	\$341,423	\$294,000
2014	\$292,350	\$0	\$21,355	\$24,305	\$45,660	\$9,451	\$55,111	7.30	\$347,461	\$260,200
2015	\$310,081	\$0	\$18,718	\$1,296	\$20,014	\$20,000	\$40,014	6.04	\$350,095	\$290,726
2016	\$243,795	\$0	\$17,050	\$19,883	\$36,933	\$0	\$36,933	6.99	\$280,728	\$261,587
2017	\$323,411	\$0	\$16,800	\$4,447	\$21,247	\$13,693	\$34,940	5.19	\$358,351	\$265,477
2018	\$303,821	\$0	\$16,939	\$4,371	\$21,310	\$10,528	\$31,838	5.58	\$335,659	\$263,547
2019	\$313,813	\$0	\$16,418	\$1,077	\$17,495	\$10,820	\$28,315	5.23	\$342,128	\$257,791
2020	\$310,502	\$110,483	\$16,152	\$48,135	\$64,287	\$6,549	\$70,836	5.20	\$381,338	\$253,317
2021	\$337,620	\$0	\$14,688	\$14,688	\$29,376	\$1,948	\$31,324	4.35	\$368,944	\$263,020
2022	\$345,700	\$0	\$15,254	\$3,171	\$18,425	\$0	\$18,425	4.41	\$364,125	\$254,000

% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	TOTAL ADDITIONS	TOTAL REMOVALS	CURR LOCAL EXPENSES	TOTAL OCWM	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
2017-2022	-23.85	-46.56	-19.35	-18.75	200.00	6.89	-13.28	1.61
2012-2022	-22.84	-53.33	-41.86	18.18	350.00	7.03	-17.65	-2.16

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:	199	Yes
Number of active friends:	64	Yes
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	263	Yes

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	70%	Yes
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	25%	Yes
Less than 5 years:	17%	Yes

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>
24	14	15	15	31	23	22	57	62	Yes

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	8%	Yes
Joint household with minors:	25%	Yes
Single adults aged 35-65:	4%	Yes
Joint household with no minors:	50%	Yes
Single adults over 65:	13%	Yes

Highest education level of adult participants by percentage:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	20%	Yes
College:	50%	Yes
Graduate School:	15%	Yes
Specialty Training:	15%	Yes

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	44%	Yes
Adults who are retired:	53%	Yes
Adults who are not fully employed:	3%	Yes

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

FCC has attracted people from all walks of life. Occupations in the congregation include public and parochial schoolteachers, college professors and technical college teachers. They also include social workers, counselors, service workers, skilled trade workers, retail workers, bankers, doctors, dentists, nurses, and lawyers, as well as some small business owners. Overall, the congregation would be described as educated with more than 50% of members of the congregation having a college education.

Many people in the congregation are involved in volunteer roles in the community, including lead roles in some organizations. Over the years, people who have held public office on the city council, county board, school board, in the public judiciary and in state government have been involved in the congregation.

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?

The FCC congregation is mostly Caucasian. This is not surprising in a community that is 84% Caucasian. But while the larger Oshkosh community has become a bit more diverse, the racial diversity of FCC has remained unchanged for many years.

There is diversity at FCC in that people in the congregation come from many different faith traditions. Few people have grown up in the United Church of Christ. We have a mix of people who have come from Catholic, Methodist, conservative Lutheran and Baptist backgrounds, so their experiences and their faith journeys vary. Our tag line – “different paths, same journey” – resonates with us for this reason.

Culturally, people at FCC have also come from a variety of backgrounds with differing traditions and experiences. We are richer for these differences.

Living out the mission of being an Open and Affirming Church and welcoming everyone makes us diverse in the wider community of Oshkosh. We were likely the first congregation in Oshkosh to openly welcome whoever came to our door. Calling a married, lesbian Pastor to lead us demonstrated our welcome to all in the wider community.

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:

FCC has not had a recent conversation about welcoming diversity and there is no plan to hold one soon.

Participation and Staffing

Ways of Gathering	Estimated # of people attending/participating	Who plans each of the gatherings?
Adult Groups or Classes-Lifelong Learning; SAGE	50-60	Pastor; Lay Leaders (SAGE); Lifelong Learning Ministry Group
Baptisms (<i>number last year</i>)	2	Pastor
Children’s Groups or Classes	18	Director of Children & Youth Ministry
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	188 131	Pastor & Organist/Choir Director
Church Council	11 including Pastor	Moderator; Lay Leaders
Church-wide Meals (Potlucks)	50-60 8-10x/yr	Coordinator for Congregational Life; Church Growth & Engagement Ministry
Choirs and Music Groups	25	Organist/Choir Director
Church-based Bible Study	8-12	Pastor
Communion (<i>served how often?</i>)	60-90 1x/mo	Pastor, Lay Leaders, Organist/Choir Director

Ways of Gathering	Estimated # of people attending/participating	Who plans each of the gatherings?
Community Garden Tending	9	Social Justice Ministry Group; Community Members
Community Meals (1 st Tuesday)	125 6x/yr	1 st Tuesday Team, Women's Fellowship
Community Meals (Warming Shelter)	75 10-12x/yr	Day by Day Meal Team
Confirmation (<i>number confirmed last year</i>)	2022-4 2023-0 2024-4	Pastor
Funerals (<i>number last year</i>)	5-Church 2-Funeral Homes	Pastor; Organist
Intergenerational Groups (Game Time)	60	Children & Youth Ministry Team; SAGE Lay Leaders; Director of Children & Youth Ministry
Knitting/Crocheting for Anti-Bullying Campaign	6-FCC 15-Community Members	Social Justice Ministry Group; Community Members; School District
Ministry Group Meetings	2-8 people/group 10 Ministry Groups 8-12x/mo	Ministry Group Facilitator
Outdoor Worship	60-70	Pastor; Building Manager; Coordinator for Congregational Life; Organist; Director of Children & Youth Ministry
Public Advocacy Work (Adopt a Highway)	10	Green Team
Retreats	None recently	Lay leaders in the past have planned Women's Retreats
Weddings (number last year)	1	Pastor; organist; wedding coordinator
Women's Fellowship Board	8	Women's Fellowship Board President
Worship (10:00 a.m.)	39-99	Pastor; Organist/Choir Director
Youth Groups or Classes	15	Director of Children & Youth Ministry; Church School Teachers
Youth Mission Trip	6 Youth 2 adults	Director of Children & Youth Ministry

Ways of Gathering	Estimated # of people attending/participating	Who plans each of the gatherings?
Other: Open Mic	10	Congregational Growth & Engagement Ministry Group

Additional comments:

The Animal Ministry Group; Green Team; Social Justice Ministry Group; Women's Fellowship have planned activities that people can get involved in such as collection of food for the local animal shelter; collection of recyclables; Reverse Advent (item and monetary collection to benefit locale non-profits at Christmas); collection for back to school fair. There is a small group that sells Fair Trade products to the congregation following worship one Sunday/mo.

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?	Ministry Setting (Role)	Retired?
Art Wille	No	Church (Pastor) WI Conference of UCC (Associate Conf. Minister)	Yes
Jack Frohn	No	Church (Pastor)	Yes

*Additional Comment: A friend of the church, Bill Urbrock, often attends services at First Congregational Church. Bill is a Professor Emeritus in Religion at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. He has specialty in the Old Testament.

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: N/A

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	Compensation (full time, part time,)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
Office Administrator	Part time	Pastor	6 mos
Director of Children & Youth Ministry	Part time	Pastor	1 year; 6 mos

Staff Position	Compensation (full time, part time,)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
Childcare Coordinator	Part time	Director of Children & Youth Ministry	8 yrs
Choir Director/Organist	Part time	Pastor	50+ years
Choir Director/Organist	Part time	Pastor	8 mos
Director of Congregational Life	Part time	Pastor	5 yrs
Building Manager	Part time	Pastor	9 yrs, 6 mos
Sunday Coordinator	Part time	Building Manager	8 yrs
Sunday Coordinator	Part time	Building Manager	3 yrs, 6 mos
Media Coordinator	Part time	Pastor	15 yrs
Media Intern	Part time	Media Coordinator	3 yrs
Media Intern	Part time	Media Coordinator	2 yrs

Reflection

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

FCC is a congregation that provides many service activities for its members and friends to participate in, both in the wider community and within the church, and many of us are very active in volunteering our



time. As our demographics show, a large percentage of the congregation is retired from full-time employment. Thus, quite a few of us have time to devote to church activities and volunteering in the community.

FCC has a high percentage of college educated individuals, and most are sensitive to the fact that others in the world, and in our community, are less fortunate than us. We have therefore worked at developing ministries to others that can provide for their unmet needs. We would like to attract more young people, and families with children, to FCC.

Parents of young children are concerned about what Christian Education will look like in the future. Common questions include, will there be Church School? Are there enough youth for mission trips? Will there be confirmation for my child? We value faith formation for the children and youth among us, so we hope to attract younger people with children to FCC. For this, we will need to provide experiences that are meaningful to them, and to do this we know that we must be open to new ideas and new ways of doing things.

We began streaming our worship services during Covid and have found that this is vital to our ministry. It was very fortunate that all the necessary equipment got installed at FCC just before the pandemic shutdown! We have a Media Coordinator on staff who assists with our online presence for worship, social media, and our website. However, he will soon retire from his position. The Church Council has therefore formed a task force to examine all staff positions and, as needed, realign staff time to ensure that we can continue to have a Media Coordinator. Streaming worship services, a presence on social media, and keeping our website current are important for serving the congregation, and for marketing ourselves to people seeking a faith community.

FCC's current sanctuary was built in 1912 and its educational/office wing was added in 1963. It's a large building that takes a great deal of our financial resources to maintain. Our most recent Financial Campaign took care of some large, expensive maintenance items, but there will always be routine maintenance that needs attention.

Music is important at FCC. In our last two visioning sessions, it became clear that many in the congregation would like more diversity in music. Some of this has occurred recently. Having an All-Church Choir one Sunday a month has also been much appreciated by the congregation. We have a beautiful organ and piano and both are well maintained. We also appreciate a variety of other musical instrumentation during worship. It takes energy and relationships with musicians to make this a reality.



Church Finances

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$238,182.00
Endowment Proceeds <i>(as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return)</i>	\$39,000.00
Endowment Draw <i>(beyond what is permitted by spending policy, "drawing down the principal")</i>	\$69,152.00
Fundraising Events	\$
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$
Grants	\$
Rentals of Church Building	\$1750.00
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$
Support from Related Organizations <i>(e.g. Women's Group)</i> . *see below	\$

Source	Amount
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$
Other (specify): Processing fees offset	\$295.00
Other (specify):	\$
TOTAL	\$348,379.00

*First Congregational Church has a Women’s Fellowship Group that is a separate business entity from the church. They are incorporated and organized under the laws of the State of Wisconsin. Their funds are separate from the church funds. The missions of Women’s Fellowship benefit the church (such as a current effort to raise funds to replace the elevator) but funds from their projects are separate from the church and not reported to the church membership. It is unknown to the congregation how much money Women’s Fellowship has, what their endowment might be, and what their budget is. This is known to the women who serve on the Women’s Fellowship’s board.

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year):

Most recent church budget is attached.

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

34% (Ministerial Support = \$115,387.00/ Total expenses - \$338,490.00)

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
- Strengthen the Church
- Neighbors in Need
- Christmas Fund

Neighbors in Need and the Christmas Fund have been supported in the past and will likely be supported in the future. In 2023, First Congregational Church participated in special offerings for Hawaii Fires and the Syria/Turkey Earthquake

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

Basis Support for OCWM is 7% of pledged income. Another 5% of pledged income is designated for local mission in the Oshkosh community. Disbursement of these funds is determined by the Benevolence Ministry Group.

What is the church's current indebtedness? None

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)	Goal	Result
2017-2022	Minimum goal \$712,000 Intermediate Goal \$875,000 Challenge Goal \$1,036,000	\$830,000 pledged and we received nearly 100% of pledged donations. There are still a few outstanding pledges which donors have indicated they intend to fulfill

Purpose:

- Benevolence Mission and Outreach Fund,
- Youth Programming Fund and consultant,
- Social Justice Program and New Initiatives Funds,
- Music Fund,
- Building repairs and improvements (Fellowship Hall, offices, Lounge, first floor offices, meeting space),
- heating and efficiency updates
- solar panel array
- update organ
- restore stained glass
- install accessible ramp and door
- technology updates (video broadcast streaming system, internal network updates),
- 10% of campaign to be given to the Wisconsin Conference Outdoor Ministry Programs

Impact:

Pledges were significantly more than the minimum campaign goal; thus we were able to:

- create new programming,
- provide significant support to UCC's outdoor ministry,
- attend to building needs,
- update the organ,
- refurbish the stained-glass windows,

- install solar panels,
- install energy efficient lighting and heating,
- invest in web streaming cameras and broadcast console
- create funds to sustain new program initiatives.

In addition to the above Financial Campaign, Women’s Fellowship raised funds to modernize the FCC kitchen into a commercial grade kitchen. Work to gut the kitchen for the upgrade began in Fall, 2015 and the kitchen was completed in Summer 2016. Our Interim pastor held a blessing for the kitchen in Fall 2016.

This was an important upgrade as some of the appliances were near the end of their “life”. Upgrading the working space was needed. To fund the project, Women’s Fellowship received a challenge grant of \$50,000, so they raised funds to match that gift through plant sales, brat sales, pizza sales, bread sales, etc. Eventually the church leadership decided that church funds would be used to finalize funding for the project. Funds raised and those from church reserves allowed for a project budget of approximately \$150,000.

The kitchen is used for all church functions where food is served, such as 1st Tuesday’s soup and bread lunch; all church potlucks; celebrations; etc. Monthly, a group of volunteers prepares a meal in the kitchen for the warming shelter. The meal is taken to the warming shelter for serving to their guests.

Lastly, there have been people in the community that have used the kitchen for launching small restaurant businesses. As this is a commercial kitchen, there are opportunities to use this kitchen to host community meals.

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

The Next Step Together Financial Campaign provided significant funds for mission by:

- engaging a consultant for children and youth programming,
- funding new children and youth program initiatives,
- funding social justice initiatives,
- creating a \$100,000 Mission and Outreach Fund (of which \$25,000 has already been loaned to the new Oshkosh Food Co-Op as an interest-free loan to build their store in addition to another \$25,000 from the church investment funds),
- funding for Social Justice programs,
- providing 10% of the campaign receipts to support the outdoor ministry program of the Wisconsin Conference.

Does your church have an endowment?

We have various dedicated funds that are essentially treated as an endowment.

What is the market value of the assets?

\$1,155,782.00

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

Some of the funds are drawn at 4% a year; for others, only actual interest is drawn.

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

We budget 4% or our general fund for operating expenses but draw more if needed to balance budget. Total draws from our investments:

2023	\$98,263
2022	\$85,678
2021	\$47,888
2020	\$66,376

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

This is a difficult projection as it is dependent upon if we draw from reserves or other investments and what future budget changes may be made, market growth of investments, and congregational generosity in yearly financial campaigns. If we draw from our reserves, we may only be able to draw for 5-10 years.

Other Assets:

Reserves (savings): \$811,853.00

Investments (other than endowment):

Our investments include the above list of dedicated funds and reserves.

Does your church have a parsonage?

No

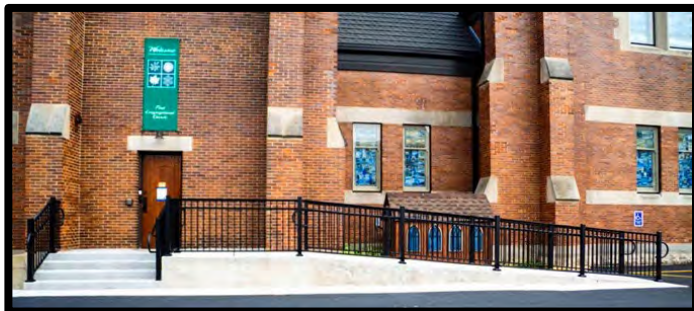
Describe all buildings owned by the church:

The only building owned by the church is the building that is the sanctuary and educational building located at 137 Algoma Boulevard.

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

None

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs?



The sanctuary is accessible to persons with mobility issues with an exterior ramp to the entrance of the narthex. The pulpit and choir loft are not accessible from the sanctuary. The choir loft can be accessed by a wheelchair through the choir room but is not barrier free to the chancel.

There is a ramp from the narthex to the educational building. An elevator provides access to the upper and lower levels of the educational building where fellowship space, church school classrooms, staff offices and meeting rooms are located. While much of FCC's space is accessible, it is a large building to navigate with a walker or crutches as there is considerable walking involved.

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

The current members and friends of First Congregational Church are the proud recipients of the generosity of previous generations of people of faith who built a beautiful church building and educational addition with lovely woodwork, and Tiffany Studio stained-glass windows. Our forebearers provided magnificent musical instruments – a Steinway concert grand piano, and a Casavant pipe organ - to be used to accompany worshippers in praise of God, and for musical presentations for the listening pleasure of the wider Oshkosh community. A recent financial campaign called “The Next Step Together” raised hundreds of thousands of dollars making it possible to refresh and refurbish the interior and exterior of the building in addition to generating monies for external mission and enriching internal programming. This was not a major budget change, but rather an effort over and above the annual budget to focus on mission and care for the building assets we have inherited.

Other than the financial campaign, First Congregational Church has not had a major budget change in many years. In late summer, on behalf of the Finance Ministry Group, the treasurer requests all Interest Groups and Ministry Groups to submit financial requests for the financial budget of the following year. By the November meeting, the Finance members generate a proposed budget for the next year. The proposed budget is studied by the Church Council at its December meeting and approved. The budget, approved by the Church Council is reported at the annual congregational meeting at the end of January.



With some of the monies from “The Next Step Together” financial campaign, FCC joined others in the community to finance a new ministry - the building of the Oshkosh Food Co-op in the central city of Oshkosh, which had been a “food desert.” In gratitude for FCC’s combination of a very low interest loan and outright gift, the store placed a “thank you” sign in a prominent shopping area.

As FCC comes out of COVID, we seek to clarify our mission and ministry. We are committed to stewarding our finances to balance our internal expression of worshipping God, nurturing the faith of our children, youth, and adults, enjoying the fellowship of shared meals and times of fellowship with seeking social justice, as well as benevolent acts of kindness, healing, and care of all creation.

Over the years, FCC's Ministry Groups have partnered with these service providers (and others) and have engaged with the wider community to understand and serve the marginalized populations in Oshkosh that need assistance. Once a month, a group prepares food in the FCC kitchen and serves a meal at the homeless shelter. Hygiene items have been gathered, distributed to homeless shelter guests, made available at the domestic abuse shelter, and placed in the care closet at the public library. These are just a few examples of outreach within the FCC neighborhood.

One particularly important development in the last 10 to 15 years is that FCC has become an Open and Affirming Congregation. Around 2005, FCC's former co-pastor, Carol DiBiasio-Snyder, became involved with the board that organized SOFA, a "drop-in" center where LGBTQ+ adults and youth could safely gather. SOFA was located one block away from FCC. Carol's work with the LGBTQ+ community led to conversations at FCC about the inclusion and safety of these individuals in our community. Revs. Carol and Ralph DiBiasio-Snyder both preached "out on a limb" sermons about acceptance and safety for those that identified with the LGBTQ+ community. First Congregational Church opened its doors to hold meetings for the local PFLAG organization (Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), and two prom events for LGBTQ+ youth were also held at FCC. These events eventually led to FCC becoming an Open and Affirming Congregation in 2009. Of particular significance is the fact that this decision was made while the co-Pastors were on Sabbatical, so it was the strong lay leadership at FCC that shepherded the process to finalization through a positive congregational vote. FCC's call of a lesbian Pastor in 2017 also helped to solidify and identify the FCC community as one of acceptance, safety, and love for all. A teen support group for LGBTQ+ youth currently meets at FCC.



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

Our co-Pastors Carol and Ralph DiBiasio-Snyder retired in 2015 after serving the FCC community for 27 years. This gave us an opportunity to look at who we would be without our long-time Pastors. It was a time of uncertainty and grief for some, while also a time of reflection, and a time to anticipate what our future together could bring.

Officially, Carol and Ralph shared one full-time Pastor position, but it seemed to many of us that, in fact, each of them worked the equivalent of ¾ to full-time. Between them they oversaw all administrative tasks, provided liaison to 12 ministry groups, planned creative and engaging worship services, and provided pastoral care to people in the FCC community and beyond.

After their departure, FCC had a full-time interim Pastor, Rev. Jack Seville, for approximately 18 months. Jack came to us after retiring as a Conference Minister in South Dakota. It quickly became clear that it would be difficult for one person to do all that two people sharing the pastoral role had done. One difficulty was being a liaison to 12 ministry groups, and setting church policy was another. In short, the governance structure was cumbersome and required too much of one person. During Jack's tenure, the staff and Ministry Council discussed how we might deal with this problem.

When a capital campaign was launched under strong lay leadership and Rev. Nancy Taylor was called, it became possible to hire a consultant to work with the Pastor and leadership team to explore how the church's governance structure and bylaws might be revised. The bylaws were suspended, and a new, temporary governance structure was established with a restructured Ministry Council (renamed the Church Council) that focused on policy within the church. It was made up of officers and members elected by the congregation. This



was a change since previously the Council was comprised of officers and a designee from each of the 12 ministry group. Much of the Council meeting time was taken up for Ministry Group reports.

However, issues arose following these changes. First, there were communication difficulties and a lack of collaboration between Ministry Groups. Second, it became difficult to recruit people to serve on Ministry Groups as the number of people participating in the church community declined. This problem was exacerbated by the Covid shutdown.

It became clear that more work was needed, and a task force was formed. Through continued study and discussion, the bylaws (which were from 2005 and sorely out of date) were updated and a new structure for Ministry Groups and Church Council was incorporated in the bylaws. (See attachment for the specific structure that is now in place.) The proposed changes were adopted by vote of the congregation at the Annual Meeting in January 2024.



Every church has conflict, some minor, some larger. Describe your congregation's values and practices when it comes to conflict.

First Congregational Church has no written policies concerning conflict and how to handle it. However, there is a Pastor-Congregational Relations Committee that supports the Pastor and can deal with conflicts involving the Pastor when they arise.

Conflicts can arise amongst members and friends when new ideas and innovative approaches have been suggested, changing how things have been done in the past. For some with long histories with the church, letting go of tradition in favor of new ways of doing things has been challenging. This has left some, both those with long histories and those with new ideas, feeling as if they have no voice in how things happen or how things are done.

When more significant conflicts or disagreements have arisen, they have been dealt with using listening sessions, mailed materials, notices in our twice weekly Member Bridge emails, and articles in *Tidings*, our monthly newsletter. Increased communication defuses conflict and leads to better and more transparent decision-making.

A recent conflict concerned a proposal to discontinue affiliation with the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC). About 2012, it became difficult financially to support full dues payments to two denominations. After careful and prayerful consideration of who we are, it was determined that we were closer to the UCC and appreciated the services that it offered, such as staff support, church camps, resource materials, etc. The task force that studied the issue decided to discontinue paying dues to NACCC but continue financial support with a donation of \$500/year. At the time, the task force envisioned that this financial support would eventually end. Changes to our bylaws enacted by the congregation in January 2024 formalized the work and thinking of the 2012 task force.

In preparation for the January 2024 vote on the proposal to leave the NACCC, listening sessions were held, giving people opportunities to express their opinions and ask questions. Relevant written materials were distributed with the notice of the Annual Meeting, in monthly newsletters, and in twice weekly email newsletters. In short, extensive, and transparent information about the proposed change was provided to the congregation in advance of the Annual Meeting.

Some in the congregation opposed leaving the NACCC because we were about to begin a pastoral Search, and this denomination might again have candidates interested in serving at FCC. Co-Pastors Carol and Ralph DiBiasio-Snyder were called through the NACCC in 1987. They served FCC as Co-Pastors for 27 years before their retirement in 2015. Others noted that anyone affiliated with the NACCC could still apply for the vacancy and that the UCC would work with the NACCC to carry out background checks and review credentials.

At the annual meeting, the congregation decided to discontinue affiliation with the NACCC. This required a 2/3 vote of those present, but in the end, more than 90% voted in favor of the proposal.

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

Staff member's name	Years of service	UCC Standing
Revs. Carol and Ralph DiBiasio-Snyder	1987-2015	Yes
Rev. Jack Seville, interim Pastor (deceased)	2015-2017	Yes
Rev. Nancy Taylor	2017-present	Yes
Rev. Jacob Nault, sabbatical Pastor	2022	Yes

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

First Congregational Church has been fortunate to have had wonderful Pastoral leadership for many years. There has not been a Pastor in living memory that people do not talk about as beloved. All of our Pastors have embraced the inclusion of children and youth in the full life of the church.

Co-Pastors Carol and Ralph DiBiasio Snyder were much loved by the congregation during their 27-year tenure, which ended with their retirement in 2015. During their pastorate we enjoyed their creative spirits in worship; joy, and warmth in celebrating God; the infusion of art into the worship experience; and their support for new ideas and practices that enriched our community. In addition, they always wove storytelling and a sense of humor into their sermons. From their personal stories we learned how to relate biblical stories and scripture to our present day lives. They helped us learn to welcome all in our worship and other activities. Their involvement and leadership in the wider Oshkosh community helped to grow our church.

After Carol and Ralph retired, we were blessed to have a seasoned and strong interim Pastor in Rev. Jack Seville. Jack loved history and always filled his sermons with the historical context of biblical times. His life experiences and stories of working with the Lakota Nation were engaging to listen to. Jack helped us grow together as a congregation as we faced a change in Pastoral leadership. He understood the difficulty we faced following the departure of Pastors who had served us for 27 years. Jack provided wonderful pastoral care and shared his caring spirit generously and graciously. He was generous to a fault. He also had a laugh like none other, so we could forgive that he was a fan of the Detroit Lions rather than the Green Bay Packers.

Rev. Nancy Taylor came to us in 2017 and helped to guide and support the lay leadership as they wrestled with a change in governance. Her experience as an attorney always served us well, ensuring that the church had good administrative oversight. During Nancy's tenure, FCC's desire to care for all creation was embraced and grew. Our welcome and acceptance of all evolved further, particularly with the LGBTQ+ community. Rev. Nancy is a gifted speaker who, amazingly, often preaches without notes while walking in the chancel. It is doubtful that anyone



crossed FCC's threshold more than once whom Nancy did not get to know by name. Her humility has served her well in her Pastoral role.

During Rev. Nancy's sabbatical in 2022, Rev. Jacob Nault was called to serve us. Prior to attending seminary, he had directed our Angel Choir (made up of grade-school aged children). When he was called as our Sabbatical Pastor, he was a newly graduated seminarian. Everyone felt comfortable helping him to "learn the ropes" in his first Pastoral role. He had a wonderful sense of humor, and there was grace as we grew together during his ministry with us. He was much adored for his appreciation of music and for injection of his own original music and song into our worship services. Jacob has a physical disability that affects his eyesight and mobility. However, his many gifts, particularly with music, helped us see beyond these challenges. We were happy to support and participate in his ordination, and we wish him well in his call to a UCC church in Waupun, Wisconsin. We feel fortunate to have had him with us and to have given him a "proving ground" as a new Pastor.



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



WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

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

- Community Vision
- Mission Insights

Community Vision

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



Since 2023, the Social Justice Ministry Group and The Green Team have partnered to collect plastics for Trex® in a project called “Recycle Beyond the Bag”. FCC members and friends can dispose of their plastic waste in bins in the narthex, and each month The Green Team takes this material to a collection site. Trex® uses it to make Earth-friendly composite decking and railings.

One incentive for this effort is that if we recycle 1000 pounds of soft film plastics and packaging within a 12-month period, the church will be awarded a Trex® plastic bench. The two groups will then select a public location to install the “Chatter Bench” so that people in



the community can use it to rest and talk with others. It is envisioned that this will be helpful to unhoused people in the community who look for places to “rest” during the day when other public spaces, such as the warming shelter and library, are not available to them.

Other good work accomplished by The Green Team includes:

- Installation of LED lights throughout the building and sanctuary
- Installation of new energy efficient heat pumps and boiler: This results in savings of \$460 per year in natural gas costs.
- Composting of food waste generated at church events.



- Installation of solar panels on the church roof. This results in savings of \$3300 per year in electrical costs, 10% of which is donated to the nearby domestic abuse shelter.
- Planting of a pollinator garden
- Replacing disposable dinnerware, utensils, drinkware, and napkins at church functions with reusable dishes, glassware, and utensils.
- Adopting a highway where The Green Team regularly cleans up litter.
- Partnering with TerraCycle to help recycle waste that is difficult to recycle.

As a result of the efforts of The Green Team and other members of the congregation, Interfaith Power and Light (IPL) has certified First Congregational Church as a “Cool Congregation” with 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

FCC’s Social Justice Ministry Group has planted a Community Garden for several years, growing greens (lettuce, kale, chard, etc.), six varieties of peppers, cabbage, beans, two kinds of eggplant, beets, tomatoes and three kinds of squash. In 2023 the garden produced over 500 pounds of food for donation to the Oshkosh Area Community Pantry.

Users of the Community Gardens represent a wider range of cultural diversity than FCC’s congregation. This has been transformational for those who tend the garden, helping them to become more sensitive to the food needs and desires of others in the community. This new knowledge is reflected in what they grow in the garden, so that food given to the pantry is more appealing to the wider population in Oshkosh.

In the Fall, some of the garden produce is brought to the FCC sanctuary to be celebrated in worship at the Harvest Festival. Afterwards, this food is distributed to the congregation for monetary donations and the money collected is given to the food pantry.

Overall, FCC has a strong connection to the Oshkosh Area Community Pantry. First, FCC was instrumental in helping to launch the pantry: seed money was given, one of our co-Pastors served on the board of directors at its inception, and a member of the congregation served as the director of the pantry for the first year it was open. Since then, many from the congregation have volunteered their time there, and benevolence dollars have been given to the pantry. There are also envelopes in the pews at FCC for people to donate to the pantry when the weekly offering is taken.





From April to November, members of the Social Justice Ministry Group harvest flowers to place on the altar on Sundays. Flowers come from the Community Garden, the Garden of Edna (a nature preserve in Oshkosh), and church members' gardens. Members have planted bulbs so that flowers can be harvested for bouquets for the church. Waste from the bouquets and plants used is composted.



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

First Congregational Church sends delegates to the Northeast Association of the Wisconsin UCC Conference Meetings in April. The Pastor also attends this meeting along with some of the lay leadership.

The Pastor and delegates attend the Wisconsin Conference meeting held in June at Daycholah Center in Green Lake, Wisconsin.

In 2021, The General Synod of the UCC was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. First Congregational Church had a bus load of people who attended one day of the meeting. One of our members is a retired Wisconsin Conference Associate Minister. He and his wife have been very active in the wider church. Both have served on committees in the Wisconsin Conference and on the National level.

In 2016, six youth attended the National Youth Event in Florida. One youth will be attending the regional youth event in Illinois during summer 2024.

Youth and families also take advantage of activities at the WIUCC camps (Moon Beach Camp and the Daycholah Center). FCC has money set aside for youth and family scholarships to these camps to make participation attractive.

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.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Accessible to All (A2A) | Just Peace |
| √ Creation Justice | Global Mission Church |
| Economic Justice | √ Open and Affirming (ONA) |
| √ Faithful and Welcoming | WISE Congregation for Mental Health |
| √ God Is Still Speaking (GISS) | Other UCC designations: |
| Border and Immigrant Justice | Designations from other denominations |
| Inter-cultural/Multi-racial (I'M) | 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?

There has been no discussion about taking on any new initiatives listed above.

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

Confirmation students visited the Ahmadiyya Mosque, the Jewish Synagogue, the Islamic Center, and the Unitarian Fellowship for worship. The 2023 youth mission trip was a joint trip with youth from the Congregational United Church of Christ in Neenah, Wisconsin.

In 2022 and 2023, FCC and Trinity Episcopal Church (across the street) and First Presbyterian Church (one block away) hosted a "Blue Christmas" service. This year's Good Friday worship was a collaborative service with the Pastor who serves St. Paul's UCC in Oshkosh and the Emmaus Community that worships in St. Paul's building.



In a yearly tradition, our Animal Ministries Group has partnered with the Pastor and members of Trinity Episcopal Church to have a pet blessing. At times, other faith communities have participated.

In the past, FCC has also collaborated with other downtown/eastside churches for a Good Friday Service. We also had, for several years, a larger ecumenical Gratitude Service in which many faith traditions participated including Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and the Pentecostal Church. That service, held

in a theater less than a block away from FCC, was led by a former Pastor at the Presbyterian Church. Unfortunately, it was discontinued when he left the church.

Our Interim Pastor from 2015 to 2017, Jack Seville, attempted to collaborate with the other three UCC churches in Oshkosh. He thought there would be opportunities for joint confirmation groups and mission activities. Collaboration with these congregations could be an opportunity explored in the future.

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.

FCC has a mission statement, known as our Dream Statement, that includes serving and sharing in the larger community, caring for the earth, focusing on education, and promoting a variety of music and art. To live out this mission, we have several ministry and interest groups which provide a range of activities. However, it is difficult to quantify the time spent gathering, governing, and going out.

Every week there are activities going on in the church which contribute to our mission of service to others and care of the earth. They range from preparation of meals for the Day-by-Day Shelter to weekly choir practice to preparation of lessons for Christian Education to efforts to collect and sort items for recycling.



We gather weekly for worship, and some of us also gather weekly for Bible Study while others gather for bi-weekly book groups. Our Church Council meets every other week to guide policies for the church, and many of the coordinating ministries and interest groups meet monthly to accomplish their work on behalf of the church.

In short, we are an active congregation with members and friends who enjoy being involved together in activities, both in the church and outside the church.

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?

There is an expectation that our Pastor will be active in the wider community through participation and support of the Social Justice Ministry Group and the Green Team. It will also be important for the Pastor to collaborate and develop connections with organizations that are recipients of funds distributed by the Benevolence Ministry Group. These connections may provide new opportunities for service in the wider community and may bring in new members.

Many in the congregation think that having a Pastor who is effective at preaching and leading worship is an important priority in our search. Searching for someone who is compassionate and caring also ranks high among the qualities we are looking for in a new Pastor.

To grow our church, attention to faith formation for our children and youth is important. Hopefully the Pastor will be able to guide our Director of Children and Youth Ministries in creating and providing programming for children and youth that is dynamic and engaging.

In the past there was a lay ministry program called the Stephen Ministry which helped to extend care to those in the church who were grieving, struggling with health issues, caring for an aging family member, etc. This helped to extend ministry to those who needed someone to listen and walk with them on their journey, while freeing up some of the Pastors' time. Revitalizing a caring ministry might be an opportunity to involve lay people and to free some of the Pastor's time to engage in worship planning and participation in the wider community.

For any Pastor it is difficult to meet all the expectations that a congregation has. However, in our congregation, we have good lay leadership. The Coordinating Ministries of the church can be relied upon to guide work that is needed to operate the church.

The ARDA (Association of Religion Data Archives)

Comment on your congregation's ARDA report with data for your neighborhood(s) or area. What trends and opportunities are shown? 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? How are the demographics of the community currently shaping ministry, or not?

FCC is in the downtown business district of Oshkosh, an older, original part of the city. We are one block off Main Street which is home to small businesses, shops, and some restaurants. There has been a recent effort to create more interest in the downtown and this area now has several cultural venues, particularly for music and art. Artists have painted murals on the exteriors of some buildings, and the Grand Opera House, built in 1883 and refurbished in 2010, is only a block away from FCC. Summer concerts occur outdoors one block away at Opera Square and at the Leach Amphitheater which is a few blocks away beside the Fox River. The farmer's market, held weekly in summer on Main Street, is one of the best outdoor markets in Wisconsin. The public library, human services agency, YMCA, and Boys and Girls Club are also in FCC's neighborhood, while the Oshkosh Police Department and the county

courthouse are just a few blocks away. Several churches are within a half mile of FCC and Pastors from a few of these churches have collaborated with FCC on worship activities.

Most housing within a half mile of FCC consists of rentals, and some of this housing is typically rented to UW-Oshkosh students. UW-Oshkosh is within walking distance of the church, so there are untapped opportunities to build partnerships with the ministries on campus and to provide services to students and others in the community. Some residential development is occurring in the downtown district. A large apartment complex is planned for blighted property along Main Street.

The neighborhood in which FCC is located keeps us mindful of those who are unhoused, those living below the poverty line, and those with mental health issues. The Day-by-Day homeless shelter is about a half mile away and there is some low-income housing within our neighborhood. Mindfulness about food insecurity led to our loan to the Oshkosh Food Co-op which helped it get started. Previously, the downtown area of Oshkosh was considered a food desert, but now the Food Co-op fills the need for groceries in this part of the city. They have a program to give discounts to people who qualify for food assistance.

Because Oshkosh is a community of about 65,000, connecting with most neighborhoods in the city is within reach. FCC children and families have done Christmas Caroling and Pumpkin Caroling at nursing care facilities across Oshkosh over the years.

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

People at FCC are known in Oshkosh for their generous spirit and give of their time to many different organizations in the community. Five percent of our pledged income goes out to organizations in our community to help fund their missions to help others in need.

We are also seen as a congregation that is interested in cultural enrichment. We lend our building to community organizations such as the Oshkosh Chamber Singers and the Green Lake Music Festival for concerts. Every year, the high school Madrigal Singers perform for a Sunday worship service. One of our missions is to host “First Tuesday”, a musical event and luncheon that occurs 6 months of the year. It is open to the community and is very well attended.

In addition to our volunteerism and benevolent giving, we lend our building to other groups to further their work in the community. One theater group has held performances in our Fellowship Hall, and another community theater group has used the Fellowship Hall as their practice venue. The local Audubon Chapter’s Executive Board meets in our building every other month.

There are agencies in the community that would like to see FCC host more community events, and we hope to do that. In years past, we have hosted a community event for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and FCC has been instrumental in hosting a community event every other year called “Empty Bowls” that raises money for the food pantries in Oshkosh. We have participated in the monthly community-wide gallery walk by displaying stoles laid down by LGBTQ+ clergy who were forced to leave their Pastoral positions due to their sexual orientation. Artwork and music have also been displayed for the gallery walk.



R EFERENCES

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1. Rev. Jacob Nault; Pastor, United Church of Christ-Waupun, Wisconsin
920-809-5579
uccwaupunpastor@gmail.com or jacobnault1@gmail.com
Jacob was Sabbatical Pastor at First Congregational Church in 2022. He served for four months.
 2. Rev. Robert Ullman, retired UCC Pastor
262-853-2621
rjullman@gmail.com
Rev. Ullman has been a mentor to our Pastor, Rev. Nancy Taylor. He has provided pulpit supply on several occasions
 3. Mary Lord Janness, Executive Director of National Alliance on Mental Illness-Oshkosh
920-651-1148
mary@namioshosh.org
NAMI-Oshkosh is a non-profit organization that has been supported by First Congregational Church's benevolence funds. Mary has been the Executive Director of this mental health resource for many years. She has attended some worship service at FCC-Oshkosh. She is a member of the Congregational United Church of Christ in Neenah, Wisconsin.

To whom it may concern,

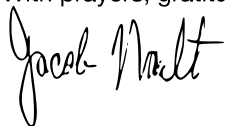
I am honored to write a letter of recommendation on behalf of First Congregational Church of Oshkosh. I have served this wonderful church in two employment capacities. First I served as Angel Choir (Children's Choir) Director in early 2018 until I left for seminary in the fall. Then, after completing seminary in 2022, I served as the church's sabbatical minister, while Rev. Nancy Taylor took time away. While both of these tenures were brief, they each prepared me for my current work as a settled pastor.

There are so many things this church does well. They take their Open and Affirming covenant very seriously, and love their neighbors well. The church's location in the heart of downtown Oshkosh presents many opportunities and challenges, to which they have responded with meaningful ministry initiatives. They have also responded with boldness to the call to care for God's earth, especially by powering a significant portion of the church using solar energy. They are deeply committed to children and youth, and involve them intentionally in worship leadership and other activities. They are a very generous congregation, which I have experienced firsthand. Not only do they compensate their pastor generously, but they also support their pastor with love, grace, compassion, and good humor. While I was sabbatical minister, I was also going through the final stages of the ordination process. I found they were receptive to new methods and ideas, and sought vibrancy in worship and community life when so many other churches are content with "the way we've always done it." They supported me with great enthusiasm and representation at both my ecclesiastical council and my ordination services. Further, my current congregation benefits from what I learned from FCC Oshkosh in ways they could never understand; FCC Oshkosh exposed me to both the joys and challenges of ministry, so I could enter my first settled pastorate with more reasonable expectations.

As with any church, this church has its growing edges. The congregation has expressed a desire for more freshness in its music ministries, a goal they are working towards with the addition of a second individual splitting the organist/choir director position. Its beautiful and historic building could likely be utilized more frequently by community organizations to help defray the enormous costs of maintaining it, especially given their location in this college town. Finally, I believe the congregation could benefit from a simplified committee structure, consolidating groups with similar interests to facilitate a smoother decision-making process than what existed during my tenure.

I would be glad to connect with anyone who would like more information about serving this church. My contact information is below. I deeply love this congregation, and pray for an innovative, creative, and compassionate pastor to serve them. There is such potential for incredible ministry in this church, as the wider church enters a new era of community life. Anyone who receives a call to this pastorate will truly be blessed by this congregation's gifts, humor, and heart for justice.

With prayers, gratitude, and hopefulness,



Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church of Waupun, WI
jacobnault1@gmail.com
920-809-5579

Reference for First Congregational UCC, Oshkosh, WI
February 3, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm writing on behalf of First Congregational UCC, Oshkosh, WI in reference to their Search Process for a new Settled Pastor. I have worked with the leadership, both lay and pastoral, over the past 5 years in a consulting capacity as a volunteer resource person with the WI Conference UCC. Most recently I facilitated a Church Council retreat in February 2023 that helped clarify and focus a vision for the congregation's ministry and mission. Prior to the Council retreat the congregation was involved in an extensive Appreciative Inquiry process to surface hopes for directions for the congregation going forward. They are in the process of implementing the ideas and commitments generated through the process and focused through the retreat.

One of the ideas surfaced at the retreat was the need to develop a streamlined and collaborative model for church governance. Since that time a task force was formed to explore options and generate a new model. That model was approved at their recent Annual Congregational meeting. I would say that one of the strengths of this congregation is a core of dedicated, smart and progressive lay leaders who have been empowered through the current Pastor's leadership to become more engaged in casting and managing a compelling vision for the congregation.

A primary focus of their ministry and mission going forward is to explore and expand on the need and opportunities for engaging in community development both within the congregation and with the greater Oshkosh area. The congregation has a long commitment to social justice as an open and affirming voice in the community. Because of its close proximity to the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh campus, the congregation has a significant opportunity to build on relationships both within its membership affiliated with the University and with other University partners. A primary focus of that work is attention to effective communication between all stakeholders in the various communities the congregation serves.

The leadership is currently engaged in a review of staffing needs and responsibilities. Coming off a long-term team Pastorate to a single Pastorate for the last seven years with part-time staff has proved challenging. Appropriate expectations of staff and volunteer responsibilities are currently being explored. Effective staff supervision is being identified as a need going forward.

Staff expenses, along with maintenance of an aging facility and multiple programming expectations is putting a strain on annual operations. The congregation recently completed a successful financial campaign to support the physical plant needs along with mission outreach. The challenge going forward will be to find effective ways to engage stakeholders in the congregation that will encourage involvement, both within and beyond the congregation, in a deepening sense of stewardship as a spiritual discipline.

It has been my pleasure and good fortune to develop working relationships with the leadership of this congregation over the past several years and to observe their growth in understanding the challenges and opportunities the congregation faces and their willingness and commitment to be forward thinking and faithful in their response. This congregation is ready to write the next chapter in their mission and ministry.

Robert Ullman,
Retired UCC Pastor
Contact me at: rjullman@gmail.com or 262-853-2621



February 2, 2024

Ginnie Sherer
1430 Menominee Dr.
Oshkosh, WI 54901

Dear Ginnie,

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as a reference for First Congregational Church. I have enjoyed my relationship with your congregation both as a visitor to your worship services and by connecting through my work at NAMI Oshkosh. My association with your church goes back many years. As a young person, growing up at Emmanuel United Church of Christ, our two churches shared experiences.

Your church has plenty of strengths. Many of your members are well educated and you seem to have an above average number of influential people. They are well connected, I would guess, to every facet of life in the Oshkosh area. And your congregation expresses non-judgmental acceptance of all people.

Your congregation has been both interested and financially supportive of community needs. NAMI Oshkosh has been fortunate to be invited to present information to members and to receive support for our programs. And we have enjoyed partnering with all of you on assisting the homeless population.

Another strength is your fabulous building. It has been well cared for and is a landmark in downtown Oshkosh. You are also welcoming by allowing others to use your space. Your recent ecological plantings are both beautiful and beneficial.

I find very few negatives things that could be said about First Congregational. People entering your church for worship are welcomed, but the larger congregation, the big imposing building and the formal worship style may be off-putting for some visitors.

Professionally, your church has been the most involved and supportive of my work at NAMI. You have also supported me personally. When I was unhappy with things at my own church, I knew I had a "second home" with all of you. I always knew that no matter how I arrived at FCC, I would leave refreshed, invigorated, and cared for.

Best wishes in your search for a new minister. It is always a challenging time. I will look forward to meeting your new pastor and teacher and hope to continue our connections.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Lord Janness", written in a cursive style.

Mary Lord Janness

525 N. Main Street
Oshkosh, WI 54901

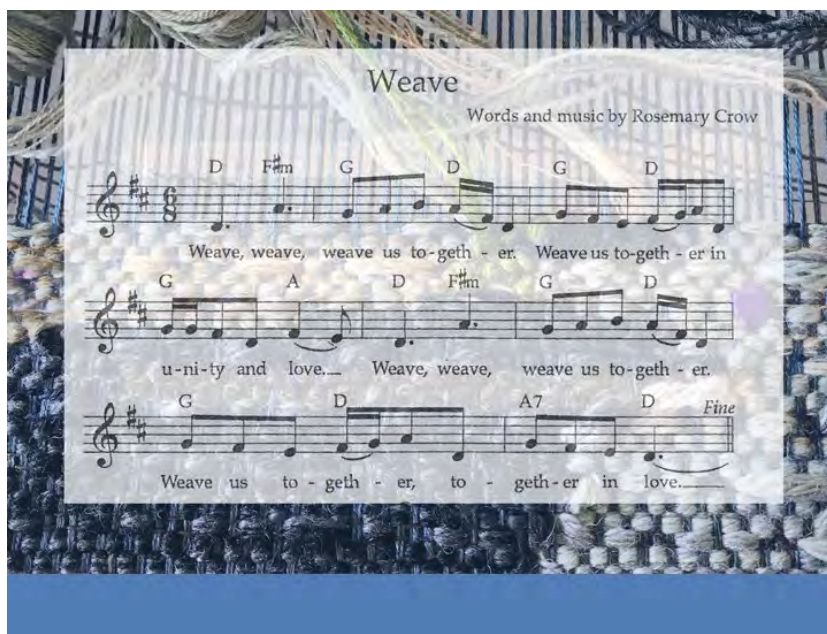


CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Closing Prayer
- Statement of Consent
- Conference/Association Validation

Closing Prayer

Thank you, God, for your guidance through this process. We cherish the work of those before us who have created and sustained the foundation of our congregation for generations. We are grateful to all who helped define the gifts, the goals, the needs, and the ongoing work of our current faith community. Now we ask you to guide us into the future as we continue our search for our next Pastor. Be with those who read our words. Be with us as we prayerfully consider all candidates in accordance with our church's vision. May your Holy Spirit weave us together to create a future filled with service and testimony to you and all people. Amen.



²⁰ Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine. Ephesians 3:20

"God is going to give you more than you asked for"

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.*)

- FCC congregation and members of Church Council through surveys, the Appreciative Inquiry Process and Review of Ministries.
- Rev. Nancy Taylor through an interview with 2 Search Committee members
- Former Church Clerk for gathering congregational demographical information
- Groups and agencies that rent/use our building were surveyed.
- Groups and agencies that received Benevolent funds were surveyed.
- Finance Ministry Group and Church Treasurer provided information in the Financial section
- Director of Children and Youth Ministries, former Director of Children and Youth Ministries, members of the Children and Youth Ministry Group, Lifelong Learning Ministry Group and the Youth Church School Teachers were solicited about questions relating to Faith Formation.
- Search Committee members.

2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

Signed: *Allyson K. Ford*

Allyson K. Ford / Search Committee Chair / April 20, 2024

Validation by Conference/Association

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

Staff Comment:

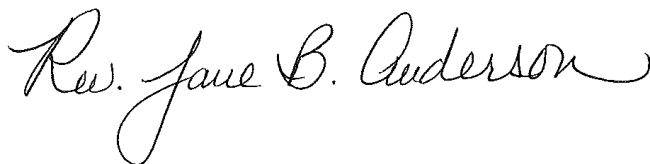
To the best of my knowledge, ministerial history information is complete.

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. Jane B. Anderson/Associate Conference Minister
Email: janderson@wucc.org
Phone: (920) 540-2586
Date: April 22, 2024

**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

Compensation Worksheet
First Congregational Church
Oshkosh, Wisconsin
2024

Salary Basis	+ 1% per year of experience	\$52,000.00
Housing Allowance included in salary basis		\$24,000.00
Church Participation	120-200 per week	\$10,000.00
Annuity	14%	
Life Insurance & Disability Plan Income	Available	
Social Security Offset	7.65%	
Group Health Insurance	Available	
Dental Insurance Premium	Available	
Optical Insurance	Available	
Continuing Education Support	Available	
Professional Expenses	Negotiable: Includes Sabbatical Offset	
Community of Practice	Negotiable	
Travel/Mileage	Negotiable	

**Bylaws of the First Congregational Church
Oshkosh, Wisconsin, Inc.
Revised and Updated
Approved by Congregational Vote – January 28, 2024**

ARTICLE I: OFFICERS

The Officers of this church shall be the Moderator, the Moderator-Elect, the Clerk, and the Treasurer. All officers shall be active members of the church. They shall be elected annually, at the Annual Meeting of the congregation.

Section 1. Moderator: The Moderator shall:

- a. Work closely with the Pastor(s) and other staff to encourage, coordinate, and guide the lay ministries.
- b. Preside over all congregational meetings and the Church Council.
- c. May sign or co-sign documents and checks as required on behalf of the Church.
- d. Engage in other duties customary to the office of Moderator or organization President.

The term of the Moderator begins and concludes at the end of the Annual Meeting of the congregation. Should the Moderator and Moderator-Elect be unable or unwilling to act at any meeting, the Clerk shall serve as acting Moderator for that meeting. The Moderator may be elected for up to three consecutive one-year terms of service.

Section 2. Moderator-Elect: The Moderator-Elect shall

- a. Become the Moderator when the Moderator vacates the office.
- b. Become acting Moderator in the absence of the Moderator at any meeting of the congregation or Church Council.
- c. Become Moderator for the remainder of the Moderator's term, should the Moderator be temporarily or permanently unable or unwilling to serve.
- d. May sign or co-sign documents and checks as required on behalf of the Church.
- e. Engage in other duties customary to the office of Moderator-Elect or organization Vice-President.

The Moderator-Elect may be elected for up to three consecutive one-year terms of service.

Section 3. Clerk: The Clerk shall:

- a. Keep an accurate record of Church Council meetings, meetings of the congregation, all baptisms, and all members received, dismissed, or deceased.
- b. Sign membership and baptismal certificates.
- c. Assure the safekeeping of all official correspondence, reports, and other important papers.

- d. Provide at the Annual Meeting of the congregation a record of all minutes of congregational meetings during the year, and report on additions and losses from the membership rolls.
- e. May sign or co-sign documents and checks as required on behalf of the Church.
- f. Engage in other duties customary to the office of Clerk or organization Secretary.

The Clerk may be elected for up to six consecutive one-year terms of service.

Section 4. Treasurer: The Treasurer shall:

- a. Work with the Finance Ministry Group to oversee all financial records and procedures.
- b. With the Financial Secretary, make a full written report to the congregation at the Annual Meeting, regular updates to Church Council, and at other times to Ministry Groups at their request. These reports shall be available to the congregation at all times.
- c. May sign or co-sign documents and checks as required on behalf of the Church.
- d. Engage in other duties customary to the office of Treasurer.

The Treasurer may be elected to up to six consecutive one-year terms of service.

ARTICLE II: PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

Section 1. Call: The Pastor(s) shall be called by a two-thirds vote of the members of the church present and voting at a meeting of the congregation called for that purpose.

Section 2. Duties: It shall be the duty of the Pastor(s) to be member(s) of the church to conduct public worship, preach the gospel of Christ, administer the ordinances, reporting all baptisms to the Clerk, watch over the spiritual interests of the congregation, and direct its Christian work.

Section 3. Termination: Sixty days written notice must be given by the Pastor(s) prior to the termination of the pastorate, except by mutual consent between the Pastor(s) and the congregation. The services of the Pastor(s) may be terminated by a majority vote of the members present and voting at a meeting of the congregation called for that purpose. In the event of dismissal, written notice shall be sent to the Pastor(s) and services of the Pastor(s) shall cease immediately, but the salary shall be continued for ninety days.

ARTICLE III CHURCH ORGANIZATION

Section 1. Church Council

- a. The Church Council is comprised of the Moderator, Moderator-Elect, Clerk, Treasurer, and five at-large members elected to the Church Council by the congregation at the Annual Meeting. Nominees for the Church Council will be identified by the Nominating Committee with input from the council and church membership.

- b. Individuals serving on the Church Council may not serve on any other Coordinating Ministry group.
- c. Members of the Church Council may serve up to six consecutive years on the council.
- d. The Pastor serves on the Church Council as an ad-hoc member with voice but not vote.
- e. Other staff and members of the congregation may attend Church Council meetings. Guests to the Church Council are afforded voice without vote.
- f. The Church Council meets monthly, no less than ten times annually, to coordinate and encourage the various ministries, consistently reminding the church of our current vision, and looking toward the future with openness, and creativity.
- g. Duties of the Church Council shall include:
 1. With the finance coordinating ministry group, establish the annual estimated income and expenses for the coming year and adopt an annual budget.
 2. Assisted by the Clerk, oversee the membership rolls with power to remove persons from membership.
 3. Appoint delegates to denominational meetings.
 4. Approve the policies and procedures as defined in the *Policies and Procedures Handbook*.
 5. Engage in governance, oversight, visioning, and major decision-making in the interests of the congregation.
 6. Call all Coordinating and Mission Ministry Groups together for a common meeting at least twice each year for conversation, coordination, and collaboration.
 7. Any governance task not specifically identified and assigned in this document is the responsibility of the Church Council, though the council may solicit assistance or assign tasks to other groups.

Section 2. Coordinating Ministries, Mission Ministries, Committees, Task Forces, and Affiliated Groups

A. Coordinating Ministries

The Church Council shall assure Coordinating Ministry groups are established and members identified by the Nominating Committee and elected by congregational vote. Coordinating Ministry groups, by whatever title they are known at any given time, shall be gathered to attend to:

1. Worship and Music:

This group focuses on ways to enhance our worship experience in all forms and works closely with the Pastor(s), and musicians, and other worship leadership. It is responsible for recruitment, training, and oversight of ushers, scripture readers,

and communion teams.

2. Benevolence

This group determines where to donate allocated church funds in our broader community and world. They also select the projects, agencies, or organizations to receive our “special offerings” throughout the year.

3. Children and Youth

Working with the staff person or volunteer assigned to coordinate the Christian Education ministry of the church, this group works to provide a high-quality Christian Education for our children and youth as well as to provide opportunities for growth, fellowship, worship, and service for the youth of the church.

4. Church Growth and Engagement

This group seeks to bring new people into the fellowship of the church by encouraging our membership to invite and welcome newcomers, by making our building inviting and user friendly, through media advertising and other outreach initiatives. In addition to intentionally welcoming new members, this group also focuses on providing a variety of opportunities for fellowship among the members and friends of the church.

5. Personnel

This ministry supports the staff of the church, meeting with each staff person regularly and addressing and making recommendations about such issues as compensation, benefits, and working conditions.

6. Building and Grounds

This group serves the church by overseeing all maintenance and repair of our building and surrounding property.

7. Finance

This ministry oversees the financial matters of the church. Responsibilities include:

- a. Assure that daily, monthly, and annual financial operations—payroll, payment of invoices, record-keeping, investments—are carried out in an accurate and efficient manner.
- b. Keep the Church Council, Ministry Groups, and the church at large regularly informed about the assets, liabilities, and current needs of the church.
- c. Advise the Church Council regarding financial concerns and options and make recommendations on the same.
- d. Encourage church members to use estate planning and other gifting to support the ministries of the church to further the ongoing and special ministries of this congregation.

- e. Actively invest and monitor such funds as are available in such a responsible manner as to receive a maximum return with reasonable risk.
- f. Conduct annual and ongoing stewardship efforts to support the annual and continued ministries of the church.

Individuals serving on Coordinating Ministry groups are identified and nominated by the Nominating Committee and recommended to the congregation for consideration and vote. Members and Friends of the church may serve on Coordinating Ministry groups, though no person may serve on more than one Coordinating Ministry group, including the Church Council. Terms of service on Coordinating Ministry groups is limited to six consecutive years.

A staff representative will be assigned to each Coordinating Ministry group ex-officio as an advisor and to facilitate communication with the staff. The Church Council will appoint a liaison to support the work of each Coordinating Ministry group.

Coordinating Ministry groups will submit minutes of meetings to the office in a timely manner and shall submit an annual report for the annual congregational meeting.

Funding for the work of Coordinating Ministry groups will be considered, and provided as available, through the annual budget process.

Coordinating Ministry groups shall meet at least six times per year.

B. Mission Ministries

Mission Ministry groups may be formed to address the needs, passions, and programs of the congregation and the world beyond the local church. Areas such as social justice, adult education, member visitation, outreach to support local social service organizations, church history, environmental care, and other such topics are examples of Mission Ministry groups.

Mission Ministry groups are a legal part of the congregation, so while groups may be formed organically by members or groups in the congregation, Mission Ministry groups are approved by the Church Council. These groups may be disbanded if the need has been met, the passions of the congregation change, volunteer energy wanes, or for any other reason.

Individuals serving on Mission Ministry groups are identified and recruited by members of each respective Mission Ministry group. Members and Friends of the church may serve on Mission Ministry groups. Individuals may serve on more than one Mission Ministry group, and there is no term limit to any individual's service. Each Mission Ministry group shall submit a roster of members to the church council in January of each year.

The Church Council will appoint a contact person to enhance communication between the respective Mission Ministry group and the Church Council. The Church Council may, at the discretion of the Moderator and Pastor and in conversation with the respective Mission Ministry group, appoint a staff representative ex-officio to the group as an advisor and to facilitate communication with the staff.

Coordinating Ministry groups will submit minutes of meetings to the office in a timely manner and shall submit an annual report for the annual congregational meeting.

Funding for the work of Coordinating Ministry groups will be considered, and provided as available, through the annual budget process.

Coordinating Ministry groups shall meet at least three times per year.

C. Committees and Task Forces

Committees and Task Forces are created by the Church Council, Coordinating, or Mission Ministry groups. These groups often serve to meet a very narrow need and, especially in the case of a task force, may be created then dissolved once the need or task has been addressed.

Areas such as nominating, pastor-congregation relations, memorials, garden and landscaping, library, and other such topics are examples of Committees and Task Force groups.

The Church Council shall create and maintain an active Pastor-Congregation Relations Committee. The Church Council shall also create a Nominating Committee at least annually.

Members are appointed to the Committee or Task Force when the group is created and may be reappointed. Task Forces and Committees meet as needed.

D. Affiliated Groups

These groups can be loosely or closely affiliated with the church, but often have their own operation or governance structure. As such, "affiliated groups" are not formally governed in any way by the church, but rather the title "affiliated group" acknowledges the relationship with the church with gratitude.

Examples of Affiliated Ministries may include groups such as the Women's Fellowship of the First Congregational Church of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and other ministries focused on community music events, animal and other ministries, or special programming.

ARTICLE III VACANCIES

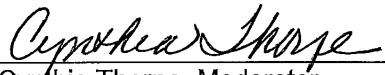
In the event of a vacancy in a Coordinating Ministry group or on the Church Council, the Church Council shall appoint individuals to fill out the term of service.

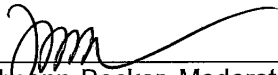
ARTICLE IV AMENDMENTS

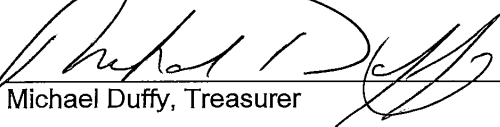
These Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the active members present and voting at a meeting of the congregation called for this purpose. Written notice shall be mailed to all active members at least fourteen days prior to such meetings, and announcement of the meeting shall be given from the pulpit for at least two Sunday services immediately prior to the meeting. The announcement shall state the purpose of the meeting. A quorum shall be ten percent (10%) of the members on the membership rolls on the day of the congregational meeting, as per Article VI, Section 4 of the constitution. Members may participate and vote in the meeting in-person or virtually. Details will be arranged by the Church Council before the official announcement of the meeting.

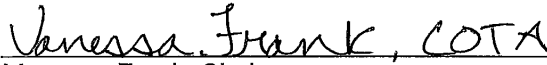
CERTIFIED OFFICIAL VERSION

Presented to the congregation at the Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church in Oshkosh on January 28, 2024, and passed with a majority vote of members present.


Cynthia Thorpe, Moderator 2/8/24
Date


Jeff Puhlmann-Becker, Moderator Elect 2/8/24
Date


Michael Duffy, Treasurer 2/2/24
Date


Vanessa Frank, Clerk 2/8/24
Date