



Brief Church Profile

First Congregational Church of Claridon
13942 Mayfield Rd., Huntsburg, OH 44046
www.claridoncongregational.com

1. WHO ARE WE TODAY – *description of who you are as a church, and your vision and mission statement*

As a congregation we are people of God who believe strongly in the power of Jesus, the presence of the Holy Spirit and God's enduring love and grace, and are committed to serving Christ through community cooperation and local and worldwide missions. We are a true congregational church where our congregants are the governing body; with a congregation of multi-generational, new and long-standing members and non-members. Some of our members are descendants of the church founders. We are diverse not only in age and ethnicity, but also with various beliefs and opinions in scriptural, theological and political matters. Our congregation is welcoming, tolerant and open-minded and we offer a safe place for everyone in the community.

First Congregational Church of Claridon UCC was established as a congregation in 1829, and our building was completed in 1831 with the labor, site, wood, and stone supplied by the founding members. The Church is located at the center of Claridon Township, Geauga County, a rural/small-town area in Northeast Ohio. In 2021, in the midst of the Covid pandemic, our sanctuary ceiling collapsed. The process of the renovation and related fundraising has developed a stronger bond with our local community and among our congregation. During the past several years of adversity, the church has grown to include increased involvement of men and younger families.

We have a strong connection to our community; our members and friends are generous givers of their time, talents and money. Our Missions committee encourages outreach supporting a variety of opportunities for local, regional and global mission projects to show our commitment to God.

We have a great passion to preserve this beautiful legacy while serving today and preparing for future generations.

2. WE LIVE OUT OUR VISION AND MISSION THROUGH THE FOLLOWING – *worship, faith formation, care and fellowship, mission and outreach opportunities:*

Our worship is pastor led, generally consisting of various sermon series on books of the Bible rather than following a strict liturgical year. In addition, she focuses on giving the congregation direction to make scripture relevant to current events and everyday life. Our pastor also prepares a weekly Children's Moment. Our lay leadership has a strong sense of calling to serve God and the church in many areas, and includes passionate individuals who offer to prepare the sermon and lead worship in the pastor's absence.

Our music ministry includes a small but very talented worship team and a handbell choir. We are blessed with a spirit filled leader and a commitment from the musicians to give their best to enhance the worship experience for all attending. The congregation enjoys listening to and participating in a variety of music styles from traditional hymns to modern praise music.

Small groups include a weekly Bible study group, and various opportunities where our members and friends gather for fellowship and to seek the word of God. We offer daily devotionals emailed to members and

friends which are also posted on Facebook, reaching out to a broader community with more potential as we engage additional platforms. Prayer requests are emailed to members and friends in surrounding communities and across the country as needed and are a source of comfort to many in our church family.

Confirmation classes meet on a bi-weekly or monthly basis for middle-school aged youth. Christian Education leaders coordinate age-appropriate lessons for children's Sunday school and Vacation Bible School in the summer as well as an Easter Egg Hunt, Advent Workshop, and Christmas Pageant. Sunday school is offered twice each month during the Sunday service to youth from Pre-K through elementary school age.

Our community outreach includes:

- Providing space and facilities for a lunch program that has produced and delivered thousands of free lunches to school children during the months school is out of session. This group also provides a free monthly community dinner.
- We share our office with the administration of a women's alcohol and drug addiction recovery home and support them with needed household items.
- We have a prayer shawl ministry that knits lovely shawls for anyone we know in need of comfort or healing.
- We cooperate with the County Department of Human Services and other local groups to support needy families with school supplies, holiday meals and gifts.
- We donate regularly to local food banks.
- We support a transitional housing program for young adults that have aged out of foster care.
- We annually provide 6-8 scholarships for young people to continue their education, using funds donated particularly for this purpose.

3. STATISTICAL DATA – As of 12/31/2023

- Active Membership: 114
- Total Reported Membership: 139
- Sunday Worship average attendance: 52
- Average Church School Attendance 9
- Members serving on Boards and Committees (DO NOT include small groups): 33
- Mission outreach giving, annual: 4-5 % of the budget
- Our church's annual plan for resourcing the ministry (budget): approximately 50% of the budget-
- Number of staff persons serving the church: Minister + 3
List staff positions: Music Director, Secretary, Custodian

4. WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME TRENDS IN THE CHURCH FOR THE LAST 5 YEARS?

Prior to the Pandemic, our church was experiencing the aging of our congregation and the passing of a number of formerly active members. But the Pandemic and the following sanctuary ceiling collapse seemed to bring us together as a church family.

In early 2020, we were required to close the church to in-person worship due to the Pandemic. But with only a short break, sermons were continued on YouTube and then the entire worship service was introduced via Zoom. We often had 20 -35 people attending online worship and meeting for virtual fellowship after each service. In warmer weather, we met outdoors in the local Claridon Township Park to worship, which continued through the summer of

2021. It was amazing to see the dedication and continuing connection of our congregation during this time. Pastor Mary Ellen went alone to the church each week to record her sermon, and the 2020 Christmas pageant was performed and recorded in family groups then combined into a wonderful online production on Christmas Eve.

As we mentioned in question 1, in June 2021, our sanctuary ceiling collapsed. The process of cleaning out the debris, working with the insurance company and the architects and planning for the actual construction, the renovation was not complete until late 2023, with our re-dedication of the sanctuary on January 7, 2024. During that period, we met to worship either in our basement fellowship hall, or during our summer lunch program, in the Claridon Township Park and the Claridon Administration Building. What a blessing, in the midst of disaster, that we were already prepared to worship outdoors due to Covid. And we were so pleased to welcome several new members during that time.

The many contributions of time and talent as well as fundraising efforts have developed a stronger bond with our local community and within our congregation. Donations and fundraising efforts from other community organizations provided a significant part of the support needed to complete the project. During the past several years of adversity, we have seen our congregation grow, with average weekly attendance going from 47 to 52 people including increased involvement of men and younger families.

5. WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR? WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME TRENDS IN THE LARGER COMMUNITY/TOWN IN WHICH THE CHURCH IS LOCATED?

Our neighbors include anyone in our individual circle of influence who is in need of comfort, peace, or healing; the aged and lonely; veterans; those locally and worldwide that are suffering.

First Congregational Church of Claridon UCC is located 40 miles east of Cleveland with easy access to small towns, and is bordered by communities that are somewhat rural. Claridon township sits in the center of Geauga County, southeast of Chardon, the county seat and northwest of Middlefield, home to the fourth largest Amish community in the world. Communities west of Claridon are generally more densely populated and reflect higher levels of education and household income. Communities to the east of Claridon are generally more rural, and reflect a younger population overall. The small towns that surround us are friendly to visit and generous, and local businesses and population seem to be growing, although overall the county population has remained steady. History is a focus in Geauga County and our historical church is a point of interest – being listed on the National Register of Historical Places.

The population of Geauga County is estimated at 95,407 as of July 1, 2023, an increase of only 0.1% since 2020 and 2.1% since 2010. The areas within 10 miles of First Congregational Church of Claridon UCC, most which fall into Geauga County, show a mix of family size and age, with the population approximately 94.7% white with only 2.3% Hispanic and 1.4% Black residents. This same area has slightly older residents than the average US population with 33.4% of its residents 55 and older, 23.8% in the 35 to 54 range and 18.4 in the ages from 18 to 34.

As of 2021 the Amish population in Geauga County was approximately 19,500 members, close to 20% of the total. We are seeing our Amish neighbors begin to move into the more rural eastern communities around Claridon, to enable them to continue their lifestyle.

First Congregational Church of Claridon strives to welcome people of all races and backgrounds and to be the place for them to grow their spiritual roots, as they settle into the church community. As we welcome

visitors to our church, we need to provide a safe space for all and allow people the respect to be who they are. We need to be open to the community for events and welcome other service groups in.

6. WHAT IS GOD CALLING US TO BE AS WE CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY?

As we look to the coming years we are being called to be more equipped to serve the congregation and community at large. Our steps in that journey start with gaining a deeper understanding of God's word, and becoming not only believers who follow Jesus, but the light for others by learning to be more comfortable sharing our personal faith walks with others.

We feel it is important to reach out especially to the youth in our congregation and community modeling how we behave as Christians. We would like to introduce Christ through music that speaks to the younger generation and communicate with younger people more effectively by improving our fluency in technology and more effective social media engagement.

We feel we need to be more open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to recognize needs and address them, to be open-minded and receptive to opportunities where we can serve the larger community and to bring God into others' lives. We look to become a church that is ready for growth, encouraging people to come together, engaging with one another. By using our building more frequently for community gatherings, we would be able to demonstrate that community engagement is a priority in addition to gaining better insight into the needs of our neighbors.

God is also calling us to become good stewards of God's creation, through commitment to and support of pressing environmental issues. We want to work together for good, continuing our church community, creating and maintaining friendships – new and long-term.

7. WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC MINISTRIES/ISSUES YOU EXPECT YOUR NEXT PASTOR TO ADDRESS DURING THEIR TENURE -INCLUDING THE GIFTS, TALENTS, AND SKILLS AND LEADERSHIP STYLE YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IN YOUR NEXT PASTOR

We are aware that the church is changing and that we are living in a time of rapid change in world and society. We do have commitment to live our vision and mission to which God has called us.

Our Vision is to bring glory to God through service to our neighbors based on Jesus' example and God's word.

Our Mission it to love the Lord through service and praise; to commit our lives to Christ; to Make Him known. We will welcome a pastor who embraces this vision and mission and walks with us, guide us as we grow into practicing our vision and mission.

8. PROVIDE AN ESTIMATED COMPENSATION RANGE you are offering in dollar amounts. If less than full-time, specify the hours of work.

We do our best to follow the Conference Compensation guidelines, although our resources are limited. Based on our expectations for the upcoming year we feel we can offer an initial total compensation package of \$60,000 to \$70,000 based on the candidate's experience and expected time commitment. We hope to find someone for 30 hours per week.

_____ *Laura Christian* _____
Council/Search Committee Chairperson

_____ June 13, 2024 _____
Date

8. COMMENTS FROM THE ASSOCIATION

_____ *Nayiri Karjian* _____
Signature of Association Staff

_____ June 13, 2024 _____

Date

Association Staff member assisting:

Rev. Nayiri Karjian, General Minister

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