

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Downers Grove, IL

Pastor of Faith Formation

Illinois Conference, Fox Valley Association

[June 17, 2024]

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

1: Position Posting

1a. Listing Information

Church name: First Congregational United Church of Christ (UCCDG), Downers Grove

Street Address: 1047 Curtiss Street, Downers Grove IL 60515

Web links: uccdg.org, facebook.com/UCCDG

Additional ecumenical affiliations:

DuPage United, Downers Grove Ecumenical Clergy Group, and the Fox Valley Association clergy groups, plus field trips to Hindu temple, Mecca Center, and Etz Chaim for confirmands.

Conference: Illinois Conference

Association: Fox Valley Association

Summary Ministry Description

We seek a second, full-time settled pastor to connect families and individuals across generations to foster deeper relationships with God and one another, empowering and equipping them in their faith journeys. The Pastor of Faith Formation is an educational, spiritual leader, serving as the primary theological resource for all Faith Formation and educational programming, the primary creative and guiding pastor for spiritual development of the congregation and staff, and the chief supervisor for all Faith Formation staff. Additional accountabilities for worship, pastoral care, church leadership, etc. can be found here (link to [Full job description](#))

Our Mission: To connect people with God and one another to serve, live, and love – guided by Christ.

Our Vision: A more just, compassionate world, united in God’s love.

Our Values: As an Open and Affirming (ONA) United Church of Christ, we seek to:

- Lead with love
- Nurture faith as a lifelong journey
- Engage with Scripture
- Embrace diversity and value all people
- Hold sacred God’s creation
- Advocate for peace and justice
- Serve our local, national, and global communities
- Share joy, hope, and kindness

Invitation: Come change the world with us!

No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.

What we value about living in our area:

With our church located in vibrant downtown Downers Grove, we enjoy restaurants, coffee shops, small specialty stores, and festivals, parades, and special events that our dynamic village hosts. Throughout the summer, on Saturday mornings, crowds descend on the Farmers Market, families play in Fishel Park (behind our church), fitness enthusiasts ride bikes or visit yoga studios while people and their dogs stroll through the downtown. Music from free concerts in Fishel Park fills the air every Tuesday evening with

crowds passing our historic building. In the cold months of the winter, the community enjoys an annual Ice Festival with a Pancake Breakfast at our church. Daily commuters to downtown Chicago utilize the train station one block from our church.

The award-winning Downers Grove Public Library is directly across the street from our church with streams of children, adults, teens, and families visiting.

We value our community that frequently offers charitable efforts such as memorial walks, fundraising events, and panel discussions on topics such as gun safety. Our community values education and the arts has highly ranked schools, and was named one of the Top 10 Livable Cities for Kids by Livability.com. Downers Grove has also been recognized by Forbes Magazine as one of America's Friendliest Towns.

Current size of membership: 514 plus hundreds of online followers

Languages used in ministry (other than English): None

Position Title: Pastor of Faith Formation

Position Duration: Settled

Compensation Level: Full Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines? Yes

1b. Scope of Work

We understand that the old model of *if you build it they will come* doesn't work in today's culture of ministry.

The Pastor of Faith Formation will use their gifts of **leadership, adaptability, and creativity** to connect all ages to God and to one another, engaging people of all ages from a variety of faith perspectives to foster their spiritual growth and development and will be empowered to discover their own spiritual gifts.

Our ideal candidate will have **leadership skills** that will work hand in hand with our Senior Pastor to embody our new model of clergy partnership that will replace the traditional model of senior pastor/associate pastor.

This will include working with the Senior Pastor, the Directors of Sunday school, the staff, the Ministry of Faith Formation, the Confirmation Leaders, lay volunteers, and other teams. They will **adapt** their understanding of nurturing faith to a new model of ministry recognizing that new communication avenues may be needed to reach people.

We encourage all of our staff to bring **creativity** to their role, to transcend traditional ideas, to create meaningful new ideas and methods to engage the congregation and the community. Their leadership and creativity will extend beyond our walls to be the church in new and powerful ways.

1c. Compensation and Support - Salary Basis & Housing Allowance

We will honor the 2023 Guidelines for the Call and Support of Ministry leadership approved by the ministry leadership team of the Illinois Conference UCC on November 22, 2022. There may be salary adjustments based on average worship attendance and years of experience. Housing allowance is calculated as 1% per month of mean average for the villages of Downers Grove, Woodridge, Lisle, and Darien.

Benefits

Retirement Annuity: 14% of Salary Basis

Group Life and Disability (through UCC Pension Boards): 1.5% of Salary Basis

Social Security Offset: 7.65% of Salary Basis

Insurance Offerings: Health, Dental, Vision

Other Compensations (to be defined in the Call Agreement):

- Mileage Reimbursement (at Federal IRS Rate)
- Continuing Education
- Professional Expenses
- Cell Phone Reimbursement
- Moving Expenses

Our church will provide four weeks of paid personal time off per year, as well as ten paid sick days and ten paid holidays. A three-month sabbatical is offered after each five years of service, with the expectation of at least one year of service following a sabbatical.

We are open to negotiating the compensation package if health, dental, and vision insurance are covered by a spouse or partner.

Pastorial Relations Teams

Each of our clergy has their own Pastorial Relations Team consisting of three to five church members selected by the Pastor and the Council. This Team facilitates an open relationship between the Pastor and the congregation and provides a framework for mutual understanding and creative conflict resolution.

What is the expected living situation for your next Pastor?

Ideally, we feel that living within an approximate 30-minute commute will allow for active involvement with our church community. Living within the community we serve isn't necessary.

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

We expect our Pastor to be involved in local and regional clergy groups and to seek opportunities for continuing growth which we support through reimbursement. Some resources include the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, Downers Grove Ecumenical Clergy Group, and the Fox Valley Association clergy groups, plus standard institutional support through the wider UCC.

1d. Who is God Calling to Pastor with Us?

Describe the ministry goals you envision your next Pastor collaborating with the congregation to achieve.

The next Pastor will work to increase the leadership pool for our Sunday School program and expand the depth and breadth of our current Faith Formation programming, working with the congregation, Pastors, Co-Directors, and the Ministry of Faith Formation.

The new Pastor will actively work with our Senior Pastor to embody this new model of clergy partnership that will replace the traditional model of senior pastor/associate pastor.

Ideally, our next Pastor will have experience and an interest in social media and will be able to celebrate and expand our Faith Formation Ministry using these tools.

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

We envision our Pastor of Faith Formation as an active, engaged participant in community events and organizations beyond our walls such as our Community Kitchen food pantry, the Youth Outlook LGBTQ2IA+ Youth Drop-in Center, DuPage PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter), or other opportunities [listed in Appendix A.](#)

We believe that when our clergy meets our community where they are, as they are, the spirit of welcome and love is extended in ways that surpass words.

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

English is the first language for almost all of our congregation; we do not require other languages to be spoken.

The Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry

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 Pastor will display to further equip the congregation's ministry in these areas.

It is our prayerful hope that our Pastor of Faith Formation will enrich the members of our faith community ***in building transformational leadership skills*** by identifying their spiritual gifts, empowering and encouraging them to utilize these gifts as leaders within our community. The ideal candidate will, much as the model of Jesus, meet people where they are, loving and challenging them to deepen their walk with God.

The individual God is calling to our congregation will empower our Church to respond to God's call, recognizing that God calls different people in different ways. Our ideal candidate will encourage leadership development of self and others through continuing education and lifelong learning, while also performing necessary and appropriate administrative tasks. The candidate will be faithful to God's calling, reflective of Christ's mission, and will be open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit.

Our Pastor of Faith Formation will exhibit the ability to ***engage us in sacred stories and traditions*** by drawing upon their inherent knowledge of the church and its roots. The Pastor will help our community relate our faith story to their daily lives.

Our Pastor will exhibit strong moral character, excellent communication skills, and personal integrity while respecting the dignity of all God's people. The understanding and the ability to Pastor to all stages of human development across the life span will be tantamount to their success in ***strengthening both inter- and intra-personal assets***.

Our Pastor of Faith Formation will ***participate in theological praxis*** and will practice theological reflection and engagement as part of one's sense of Pastoral identity. We believe that as a spiritual leader to many, our Pastors also need to ensure that their own spiritual life is cultivated and nurtured. We encourage our clergy to take two days off as Sabbath during the week for study and reflection along with time away for theological development recognizing that one cannot give without also being open to receive what God is still speaking to us.

We will seek to partner with our clergy, encouraging them to continue in their own daily practice of spiritual care. In having that foundation of practice, our Pastor of Faith Formation will integrate theological reflection in teaching, preaching, and ecclesial and community leadership using a variety of theological perspectives.

2: Who is God Calling Us to Become?

What is God calling you to become as a congregation? Describe how God is calling you to reach out to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of your community and congregation?

We believe, now more than ever, that we are called to be an uplifting and visible witness of God's hope and love in our community. People throughout our society are struggling with depression, anxiety, and loneliness. As a uniting church we prayerfully seek ways we can continue to build bridges with other organizations, faith communities, and individuals to help people connect and grow in community. We realize that it will take more than just wishful thinking to make this happen. Our new Pastor of Faith Formation will be a key component in helping us discern where God's Spirit is leading us.

Our search process has led us to a deeper understanding of who we are and who we want to become — an even better version of ourselves — the church that cares.

In 2018, UCCDG leadership and members undertook an ambitious visioning process. Based on three distinctive sessions of congregational input, and the services of Convergence, a faith-based consulting firm, we concluded with a strong sense of who we are as a church and who we want to be in the 21st Century.

We questioned critical areas of our church -

- What is exciting about our church?
- Why does it matter that our church is in Downers Grove?
- What is our unique message to the world?
- Why do we do what we do?

The responses ([link here](#)) to this were enlightening and inspiring, with strong common themes identified as the strengths and opportunities of our church -

- The pastor's sermons
- Music that is stirring and inspiring
- A congregation that is open and caring
- Involvement in social justice issues
- Vibrant, engaging activities for youth
- Comprehensive programming for children

A strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) exercise, conducted as part of the visioning process, identified these **weaknesses and threats** -

- Increasing polarization, anxiety, and anger in wider society
- A breakdown of trust in institutions, including organized religion
- Church membership is in decline across all denominations and generations.
- A fast-paced online environment impedes reflection and spiritual growth.
- Millennials rely on technology vs. in-person events for communications.
- Sports, social activities, family time, consumerism, and relaxation take precedence on Sundays.
- Social/humanitarian efforts can be pursued outside of church.

These complex challenges have pushed our congregation to expand the traditional notions of what a church is and can be. Live and archived online services are on our website and Facebook where attendees often use the comments feature to welcome each other, share thanks, offer support and prayers, and provide a sense of community. The Broadcast Ministry has brought over 10,000 people through our virtual doors.

Our growing Facebook presence takes our online message even further. These online efforts speak to those who rely on technology, a fast-paced online environment, and on demand services.

We continue to live our mission outside of church walls by serving the community through DuPage Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS), Hope's Front Door, Bridge Communities, English-as-a Second-Language (ESL), The Greater Chicago Food Depository, Caring for Creation, Prison Ministry, The Community Kitchen, Two Way Street Coffee House, scouts, and mission trips. These ministries (Appendix A) provide meaningful in-person, rewarding experiences for those seeking involvement in social/humanitarian efforts and fulfilling, new ways to experience reflection and spiritual growth.

A great **strength and opportunity** for UCCDG is our well-established online presence which was established in 2014 for our homebound members. In March 2020, we successfully transitioned to a completely online format due to the pandemic. This transition was made easier by the fact that we had a professional broadcast system already in place and resulted in welcoming new church members who hadn't even set foot in our brick-and-mortar church.

Our reputation in the community as **the church that cares** is a significant **strength** for us. Our people are a HUGE strength - they do great things with the resources we have. Our laity is a light to the community and it's our lifeblood. UCCDG has been a highly visible, unifying, and active part of our community since our founding. Our central location is an essential **strength** in serving the elderly, youth, disadvantaged, homeless, and people in need of social services. Our church is walkable and accessible by public transportation.

In 2020, our church had the unique **opportunity** to purchase property immediately adjacent to our church. We have engaged in formal visioning sessions to determine how we want to use this property in support of mission projects, community outreach, and future needs that align with our church's vision. There are many possibilities - transitional housing, music, recreation, community gathering space, green space, additional parking.

Pandemic needs prompted us to create a Community Kitchen at our new property to serve those in need of food, clothing, and other necessities. The Community Kitchen is a great success and has fed our collective excitement about possible uses for the new property.

At the end of this visioning process, the key recommendations from the Convergence Report were:

Focus Your Goals – Clarify your goals being a hybrid congregation including Faith Formation and Mission and Justice. You have communicated excellent music and preaching through online services. Determine how to engage this audience into becoming an active part of your congregation.

Complete Your Search for Your Pastor of Faith Formation – Complete the search for your Pastor of Faith Formation and determine how this new staff structure can help you achieve your mission and goals.

Utilize Your Properties to Reach Your Goals – While your congregation identifies top priorities as worship, children, youth, and mission/justice ministries, it is unclear which priority should be the focus of the property development. Use focus groups and interviews with your congregation and community partners to further clarify these priorities into specific goals.

Engage Your Congregation & Community - Use your clarified goals to build a plan to increase the number of people who are actively engaged in your mission and ministries. Include discerning how to bring your neighbors and online-only people into the work from where they are. Use your work with community partners, your pastor's networking and communication skills and the technology and engagement skill of new staff to clearly communicate your mission and goals to the surrounding community. Actively invite them into engagement with your work.

3. Who Are We Now?

3a. Congregational Reflections - Describe your congregation's life of faith.

We are a congregation that recognizes the dynamic changes in the world and the church. Now more than ever, we feel called to be a church beyond the walls of the building. As we experience the rise of nationalism, the effects of climate change, the discrimination against racial, ethnic, and LGBTQ2IA+ groups, the polarizing differences among people, and the tragedies of gun violence, we are called to be sources of light and healing in our community and our world. We encourage community dialogue and education around topics such as housing insecurity, the opioid epidemic, and gun violence, with guest speakers, forums, and discussions in our church.

We believe that our life of faith makes it imperative to be a witness to the work of God, to lift up the poor and marginalized, and to boldly proclaim the good news of God's great love for all creation. To live our faith outside the walls of our church, we lead a coalition of churches and volunteer organizations to host a Community Kitchen and clothing pantry for the most marginalized and vulnerable. During the pandemic, we served over 16,000 meals in The Community Kitchen and purchased outdoor showers when our homeless neighbors couldn't use our indoor facilities. We continue these efforts today.

While every church struggled during the pandemic, our faith community rose to extraordinary heights to keep us together. From the very first week of the pandemic, we did not miss a service, because we were already online. During the pandemic, our online viewers ranged from 700 to 1000. With our Broadcast Ministry, we created online daily devotionals, Sunday school and Confirmation classes.

Our Music Ministry created a virtual choir with people from all over the country. For Christmas 2020 we had a virtual Christmas Concert and Pageant. Despite freezing temperatures, we had two outdoor Christmas Eve Services in the park with over 50 people.

We did everything possible to keep people connected. We visited our homebound members through windows and doors. We created a Community Pantry and organized birthday car parades, and a 50-car drive by parade for residents in a retirement community. We formed a phone tree to continue connecting with our members. We held outdoor services through both summers.

This is our faith lived out in the everyday world. We may not be the biggest church in the community, but we are active and visible, spreading undeniable graciousness and compassion.

One of our values is to nurture faith as a lifelong journey. For us, baptism is more than a Sunday morning celebration - it is the beginning of a life journey we share with God and with one another. During every step into adulthood, we offer opportunities to learn and grow through mission, fellowship, and continued Bible study.

As an Open and Affirming church, the first words of our Sunday service are "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

We are known *in* our community as the church that cares *for* our community.

We are a ***responsive congregation***. Early in the pandemic, shelters closed for public health reasons. Our church began making and serving sack lunches and distributing toiletries, clothing, and gift cards to those in need while a group of high-school students was serving meals out of the trunks of their cars to others in need. We joined these students and other churches, individuals, and community organizations to form The Community Kitchen in a building on our site. Hot breakfasts and dinners were served daily for more than two years - more than 16,200 meals.

We are a ***resilient congregation***. We hosted the UCC Fox Valley Association meeting just nine days after the 100-year flood left six inches of water standing in our entire lower level, including our Fellowship Level. We continued hosting our Sunday worship services despite threats from far-right groups to hijack a worship service. We were united in our resolve to confront our feelings of betrayal when an associate Pastor was arrested for theft. We survived a ransomware cyber-attack that scuttled much of our church server network. We emerged after the dark, confusing times of COVID with a greatly expanded online congregation.

We are a ***fun-loving congregation***. We enjoy each other beyond Sunday worship and beyond our church walls. We even have a [Facebook album](#) entitled *So We Like Cake*. We have hosted Bowling Parties, Paddleboat Cruises, Tower Hill Campouts, Progressive Dinners, Trivia Nights, Murder Mystery Night, Game Nights, Ice Cream Socials, Pancake Breakfasts, Concerts in the Park, and Outdoor Worship Services.

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

On Sunday mornings, you will hear laughter from the pews and see people sharing smiles, handshakes and hugs. As soon as the music starts, whether by the band or the choir, the feeling in the sanctuary changes. Emotions rise as notes from the piano, saxophone, bass, and drums fill the air.

Our music is an eclectic mix, led by vocalist and Director of Music Ministries Kelley Calpin, with Band Director Justin Kono, and a dedicated team of musicians. The music is specially chosen for each service to blend with the message from the pulpit and Scripture. Contemporary music from popular and well-known artists combined with traditional hymns creates an energy in the congregation that makes our worship services unique.

The reputation of our music and how it embodies our services has become so widespread that we were asked to lead a worship conference workshop on music and spoken word with other mainline area churches at Elmhurst College.

Our services are thematic and engaging. Skits and special readings involving kids, youth, and adults from our congregation often add a new dimension. Inspiring visuals, Scripture verses, and song lyrics are projected making it easier for congregants to participate.

During sermons, the sanctuary is often silent, with congregants listening intently to messages that resonate among the young and old alike, always focused on living out our church's mission, vision, and values in an increasingly complex world. Reactions might range from thoughtful to tearful or from joyous to heart breaking - but there is always a reaction. We always end with a joyous postlude, leaving us recharged and refueled, inspired to be joyous and bring the good news to others.

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

It is our vision to engage every age group in nurturing a deeper understanding of our relationship with God through teaching or discussion that promotes Biblical literacy and spiritual maturity. Our Faith Formation-ministry is centered on the shared values of nurturing faith as a lifelong journey and engaging with Scripture. These roots sustain our efforts to live those values, to lead with love, embrace diversity, share joy, hope, and kindness, all while holding sacred God's creation.

Since October 2019, Faith Formation for youth and adults has been assumed by Transitional Pastor Michelle McNamara with administrative assistance from temporary part-time staff. We have two new Directors of Sunday School who have brought energy and excitement to our programs and dedicated lay volunteers have enriched our Sunday School and Confirmation programs. The Faith Formation Ministry has laid the groundwork for a program recovering from the loss of momentum due to the pandemic.

We envision our new Pastor of Faith Formation working toward building a cohesive program connecting the same theological framework across all age groups. Our current class offerings include curricula for all ages and could be the basis for a reimagined Faith Formation journey.

- Children from age 3 through grade 3 attend weekly classes utilizing Godly Play or Picture the Bible curriculum.
- Children in Grades 4, 5, and 6 attend a more discussion-based class utilizing Echo The Story.
- We have an annual Vacation Bible School presented in a variety of formats.
- We have a two-year confirmation program for Grades 7 and 8.
- Our junior high and senior high youth groups have included weekly fellowship and mission projects.
- Church Without Borders is an online adult Bible study averaging 90 participants per week.
- Read Through the Bible is our latest in-person Bible Study focusing on each of the Biblical authors.

Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

Our congregation creates and coordinates ministry and mission programming democratically via Ministries and Teams led by an elected Church Council. The Council is composed of Ministry Chairs, Clergy, Church Moderators, Treasurer, and Clerk and acts on behalf of the congregation between congregational meetings.

Each Ministry is composed of three to four elected members and a chair. Ministry and Team members generally commit to serve a term of three years with a limit of two consecutive terms. Non-elected supporters can assist with projects by volunteering their time and talents without a designated duration of service.

We currently have eight Ministries, elected by the Congregation:

- Ministry of Buildings & Grounds
- Ministry of Christian Community
- Ministry of Congregational Care
- Ministry of Faith Formation
- Ministry of Mission & Justice
- Ministry of Outreach & Membership
- Ministry of Stewardship
- Ministry of Worship and Arts

We also have three Teams, appointed by the Church Council:

- Endowment & Audit Team
- First Congregational Learning Center (FCLC) Team
- Personnel Team

We also have a Pastorial Relations Committee for each called clergy composed of members selected by the clergy member and the Council. Additional Teams and Committees are appointed as needed.

All Ministries, Teams, and the Church Council meet monthly. Decisions made at the congregational, council, ministry, team, and pastoral level are shared promptly through Sunday morning announcements, weekly eNews, monthly Pilgrim newsletter or via special announcements. We are committed to transparency and make meeting minutes and decisions available to our congregation.

Copies of our Constitution and Bylaws, Personnel Handbook, Staff Covenant, and our current Annual Report are available upon request.

Example of Church leadership in response to a crisis

During the worship service on the second week of Advent, December 9, 2018, the children's choir and Christmas pageant, as well as a baptism, were part of the service.

The Children's choir had just finished singing and were sitting on the chancel steps when suddenly, immediately in front of the children, a man dressed in bulky clothing and a hat stood and loudly disrupted the service by quoting scripture, twisting it to berate us and our stance on ONA and other issues. And he was not alone. Two others in the rear of the sanctuary started videotaping and later stood outside the church to engage anyone leaving the church. This group had picketed area churches and invaded two other Downers Grove church worship services. They had also been terrorizing [Downers Grove High School students](#) by picketing outside their schools displaying graphic abortion pictures

This happened just five weeks after the shooting at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh where 11 people were killed. The threat of violence was on everyone's mind. The congregation listened in shocked silence for a few moments. Pastor Scott and several members quietly but firmly asked the intruder to leave, blessed him, and escorted him out of the church. We locked the doors and resumed our service, the children's Christmas pageant, and the Baptism.

In response to this attack, we elevated our focus on our values and our beliefs. We held Bible studies to reiterate the reasons we became an ONA church and explored the seven specific texts used against the LGBTQ2IA+ community. We created an active shooter plan with the help of a retired police officer, held special usher meetings, updated security measures and installed an easily accessible 911 phone.

We reached out to other churches who experienced attacks and met with the UCC Fox Valley Association. We took legal action to obtain a restraining order against members of this domestic terrorist group. We hosted a gun violence forum in our sanctuary bringing together individuals from disparate groups and once again, became the focus of hate mail and threats from state militia and rifle groups.

Not every church is bold enough in its mission to be the target of such an attack *because of its witness to the world*. Because of our visibility in the community, we were. We are proud of our church, its leaders and its members who believe in our values, act on them, and live out our mission in the world around us.

3b. 11-Year Report

You can find the current report [here](#).

3c. Congregational Demographics - Describe those who participate in your church.

| | | |
|--|---------|---|
| Number of active members: | 463-527 | We are in the process of determining if about 50 people are still active members; that is why we have such a variable number. |
| Number of active non-members: | 51 | This estimate includes children, non-confirmed young adults and adult supporters who have not become members. |
| Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above): | 514-578 | We can safely estimate 525-550 |

Percentage (estimated) of total participants who have been in the church:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| More than 10 years: | 43% |
| Less than 10, more than 5 years: | 36% |
| Less than 5 years: | 21% |

Number of total participants by age (estimated):

| 0-11 | 12-17 | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65-74 | 75+ |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| 76 | 65 | 69 | 117 | 82 | 77 | 102 | 118 | 105 |

Percentage (estimated) of adults in various household types:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Single adults under 35: | 30% |
| Households with minors: | 12% |
| Single adults age 35-65: | 20% |
| Joint households with no minors: | 20% |
| Single adults over 65: | 18% |

Education level of adult participants by percentage (estimated):

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| High school: | 10% |
| College: | 35% |
| Graduate School: | 30% |
| Specialty Training: | 25% |
| Other (please specify): | |

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

We do not collect or estimate employment information.

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

The majority of the congregation are professionals specializing in education, healthcare, business, and the arts.

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?

We are diverse socio-economically with a mix of blue collar and white collar. We estimate our congregation to be 5% non-Caucasian including: Asian, Native American, African, and Hispanic. We are an Open and Affirming (ONA) church.

Section 3c

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

We have not engaged in a formal dialog about how we can intentionally be more diverse outside of our normal welcome and hospitality, but we are very open to do so. We do hold conversations about race and points of disadvantage/advantage due to race and poverty from the pulpit, in Faith Formation, and in our ministries.

3d. Participation and Staffing

Services and Sacraments 2020 - present

| SERVICES | DATE AND TIME | ATTENDANCE | RESPONSIBLE |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Sunday Worship | 2019 | 170 in person | Pastors, Worship Team, Music Team |
| | 2020 - pandemic | 75 in person 220 online | Pastors, Worship Team, Music Team |
| | 2021 | 103 | Pastors, Worship Team, Music Team |
| | 2022 | 137 | Pastors, Worship Team, Music Team |
| Christmas Eve 2022 | 4 p.m. | 137 | Pastors, Worship Team, Music Team |
| | 8 p.m. | 175 | Pastors, Worship Team, Music Team |
| | 11 p.m. | 75 | Pastors, Worship Team, Music Team |
| Palm Sunday 2023 | | 125 | Pastors, Worship Team, Music Team |
| Maundy Thursday 2023 | | 60 | Pastors, Worship Team, Music Team |
| Good Friday 2023 | | 50 | Pastors, Worship Team, Music Team |
| Easter 2023 | 6 a.m. sunrise | 35 | Pastors, Worship Team, Music Team |
| | 9 a.m. | 225 | Pastors, Worship Team, Music Team |
| | 11 a.m. | 100 | Pastors, Worship Team, Music Team |
| Baptisms | 2021 | 10 | Pastor, Music Team Pastorial Care |
| Baptisms | 2022 | 3 | Pastor, Music Team, Pastorial Care |
| Baptisms | 2023 | 6 | Pastor, Music Team, Pastorial Care |

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Weddings | 2021 | 0 | Pastor Scott |
| | 2022 | 2 | Pastor Scott |
| | 2023 | 0 | Pastor Scott |
| Confirmation 2021 | annual/youth | 7 | Pastors, confirmation leaders |
| Confirmation 2022 | annual/youth | 6 | Pastors, confirmation leaders |
| Confirmation 2023 | annual/youth | 8 | Pastors, confirmation leaders |

Faith Formation Activities - 2020 to present

| ACTIVITIES | | | |
|--|------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|
| Retreats | semi-annual/youth | 20 | Pastors, lay leaders, teen youth |
| Prayer groups | | 32 | Prayer chain/Pastor Sanders |
| Sunday School | Weekly/Children | 25 | Pastor Michelle, Faith Formation |
| Children's Musical | Children | 10 | Maria Carini |
| Vacation Bible School | Annual | 25 | Faith Formation |
| Youth Mission Trip Fundraiser Breakfast | one time/all ages | 100 | Pastor Michelle, youth leaders |
| Chancel Choir | weekly/adults | 15 | Director of Music Ministry |
| Alleluia Ringers | weekly/all ages | 12 | Maria Carini |
| Junior Choir | | 6 | Director of Music Ministry |
| Online Bible Study | weekly/adults | 75 online | Pastors Scott and Michelle |
| Bible Study in person | weekly/adults | 10 | Pastor Scott |
| Spring Musical | annual/children | 6 | Pastors, Music Team, parents |
| Christmas Pageant | annual/children, youth | 12 | Pastors, Music Team, Parents |
| Christmas Concert | Annual/all ages | 25 | Music Team |

| | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----|--------------|
| Outdoor worship 2022 | weekly/all ages | 70 | Worship Team |
| Funerals | 2021 | 8 | Pastor Scott |
| | 2022 | 9 | Pastor Scott |
| | 2023 (as of May 2023) | 0 | Pastor Scott |

Mission and Justice Activities - 2020 to present

| ACTIVITY | FREQUENCY | ATTENDANCE | RESPONSIBLE PARTY |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Community Kitchen | daily/adults` | 25 | Coalition of groups |
| Hope's Front Door | 4 x per week | 135 per week | community and members |
| Shower Ministry | weekly/adults | 4 | community and members |
| Boy Scout Troop 55 | weekly | 13 | Pastor Scott and youth leaders |
| DuPage United | monthly | 8 | Mission and Justice |
| Prison Ministry | varies | 5 | Pastor Scott, Mission, and Justice |
| LGBTQ2IA+ Activism | varies | 25 | Pastors, members, community |
| Alcoholics Anonymous | weekdays | 25 | community leader |
| Al Anon | weekly | 12 | community leader |

Fellowship Activities - 2020 to present

| Activity | Frequency/ages | Attendance | Organizer |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Women's Fellowship | monthly/adults | 10 | Lay leader |
| Coloring Group | weekly/adults | 8 | Lay Leader |
| Men's Book Club | monthly/men | 10 | Lay Leader |
| Book Club | monthly/women | 15 | Lay Leader |
| First Friday Fun Night | monthly/families | 30 | Lay Leaders |
| Tour of Israel/Palestine | one time | 16 | Pastor Scott |
| Sunday Coffee Hour | weekly/all ages | 50-60 | Members |
| Two Way Street Coffee House | 9 events per month | 30 average | community and members |

Additional comments:

Because of the pandemic our programming changed drastically with everything possible moving online. In-person programming and attendance has expanded in 2022-23 as members become more comfortable participating in person.

List all members or regular participants in your congregation who are ordained, licensed, or commissioned Pastors. 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 | Covenant | Ministry Setting | Type of Ministry Role | Retired? |
|------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Cathy Sanders | 3 | Employed PT at UCCDG. | Pastor of Pastorial Care | N |
| Karen Nachtigall | 3 | Retired, participating at UCCDG | | Y |
| Greg Skiba | 3 | Retired, participating at UCCDG | | Y |
| Steven Taylor | 3 | No longer in ministry | | N |
| Gail McDowell | 3 | Retired, not participating | | Y |

If one or more previous pastors or retired Pastors currently hold membership in the church, describe their role(s) in the life of the congregation:

All of our previous pastors are active elsewhere. Other retired clergy are largely invisible in terms of participation outside of worship and they prefer that anonymity. Two of the three ordained, retired pastors consider themselves active, engaged members of the congregation, seeking to grow in faith and serve however they can.

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

2023 staffing

| Staff Member | Position | Supervises | Volunteer | Supervisor | Service |
|----------------------|---|-------------------|------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Scott Oberle | Senior Pastor | Yes | FT | Council, Personnel Team | 11 years |
| Michelle McNamara | Transitional Pastor | Yes | PT | Council | 3.5 years |
| Cathy Sanders | Pastor of Pastoral Care | | PT | Scott Oberle | 23 years |
| Kelley Calpin | Director of Music Ministry | Yes | PT | Scott Oberle | 7 years |
| Maria Carini | Assist to Director of Music Ministry | | PT | Kelley Calpin | 19 years |
| Justin Kono | Band Director | | PT | Kelley Calpin | 15 years |
| Martin Pazdioch | Administrative Secretary | | FT | Scott Oberle | 1 year |
| Laura Frencl | Accountant | | PT | Scott Oberle | < 1 year |
| Kimberly Choate | Director, FCLC | Yes | FT | FCLC Board | 7 years |
| Dan Grajczyk | Custodian | | FT | Scott Oberle | 1 years |
| Jenni Hallman | Sunday School Coordinator | Yes | PT | Michelle McNamara | < 1 year |
| Kimberly Choate | Sunday School Coordinator | Yes | PT | Michelle McNamara | < 1 year |
| William Hammack | Director of AV and Lighting | | PT | Scott Oberle | 26 years |
| Len Potter | Streaming Production | | PT | Scott Oberle | 10 years |
| Joey Vana | Audio Specialist | | PT | Scott Oberle | 9 years |
| Dave Humphreys | Community Liaison | | Volunteer | Scott Oberle | 3 years |
| Tom Williams | Business Administrator | | Volunteer | Scott Oberle | 9 years |

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

We believe that our staffing reflects our commitment to grow beyond 20th century models of ministry. We are emphasizing relational ministry and staffing to reach beyond the walls of our church facility while maintaining several traditional positions.

3e. Church Finances

| Income Source | Amount |
|---|---|
| Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving | \$519,483 |
| Endowment Proceeds <i>(as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return)</i> | \$94,130 |
| Endowment Draw | \$0 |
| Fundraising Events | Gift card contributions - \$1,600 (2020) Garage Sale -\$7500 (in 2019) annually Pancake breakfast - \$900 (2020) annually |
| Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose | Over \$100,000 (2020) |
| Grants | Over \$100,000 (2020) |
| Facility Use Cost Offset | \$56,854 |
| Rentals of Church Parsonage | N/A |
| Support from Related Organizations <i>(e.g., Women's Group)</i> | Included elsewhere |
| Transfers from Special Accounts | N/A |
| Other (specify): Other Income – Miscellaneous | \$2,440 |
| TOTAL | \$882,907 |

Current annual income (dollars used during most recent fiscal year - 2022): \$798,276

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year - 2022): \$797,246

Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total Pastoral support. What is the percentage? 31%

Has the church ever failed to pay its financial obligations to a Pastor of the church? No

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

- Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM – Basic Support)
- One Great Hour of Sharing
- Strengthen the Church (not in 2020 during the pandemic)
- Neighbors in Need (not in 2020 during the pandemic)
- Christmas Fund (not in 2020 during the pandemic)

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered? If calculated as a percentage of the operating budget, what is that percentage? Budgeted, 6%.

What is the church’s current indebtedness?

- Total amount of loan debt:** \$21,373
- Reason for debt:** Construction and repairs
- Are capital and other payments current?** Yes

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

| Year(s) | Purpose | Goal | Result | Impact |
|---------|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---|
| 2014-19 | General capital improvements | \$1.5M | \$1.3M | Interior & exterior repairs; fire, safety & access installations; roof, parking lot, sound system, bathroom and office renovations. |
| 2020-21 | Replacement of front stairs | \$141,700 | Completed | Replace deteriorated stairs. Improve face to community. |

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

Does your church have an endowment? Yes

What is the market value of the assets?

\$1,626,000 at 06/11/2023

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

We annually withdraw a portion of the earnings and occasionally draw from the principal with congregational approval.

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

5% annually from the earnings

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

5% of the average value of the last five years is withdrawn each year.

At the current rate of draw, how long might the endowment last? Scores and scores of years.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates: Accurate.

Other Assets

Reserves (savings): \$30,000 as of 06/11/2023

Investments (other than endowment):

There is approximately \$650,000 in operating and reserve funds as of May 31, 2023.

- \$445,000 Operating Fund (\$175,000 is for FCLC)
- \$59,000 in a Capital Campaign fund (used as needed for larger building maintenance)
- \$132,000 Pastoral Support Funds (currently invested in two CDs)

Does your church have a parsonage? No

Describe all buildings owned by the church:

The entire church building at 1047 Curtiss Street is nearly 43,000 SF with six levels.

The original 1916 portion of the building houses the parlor, the library, the commercial kitchen, and the Broadcast Ministry facilities.

The 1925 addition houses the sanctuary and Fellowship Hall, PADS showers and laundry facilities, and the mechanicals.

The 1950s addition includes the nursery, Two Way Street Coffee House, and the conference room.

In 1963, an education wing with 24,000 SF was added. It houses the offices, youth rooms, FCLC, Hope's Front Door, and chapel.

The property at 1101 Curtiss, adjoining the church, is a standalone structure of 7800 SF used for storage with an additional structure of 750 SF used for Community Kitchen distributions.

[See a history here.](#)

Describe non-owned buildings or space used or rented by the church: None

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs? Our main sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, and all floors of our building are accessible to wheelchairs. Only the pulpit, chancel, and choir lofts are not.

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

We adhere to a mission of being fiscally responsible. The mission and ministry to our church congregation and our community continues to be responsive and expansive.

3f. Historical Information

With a history of 157 years, there is an [extensive list of significant happenings](#). Here are major events that shaped the direction of our church.

- The Blodgett Family, founding members of UCCDG, acted as a stop on the [Underground Railroad](#) from the 1840s to the 1860s.
- In 1961, our Family Life Program was founded to fill a need in the community for preschool. Today it is the First Congregational Learning Center (FCLC) fully accredited by the Department of Children and Family Services. It is one of the oldest, continuously running preschools in DuPage County and provides childcare ranging from infants up to 5-year-olds. Currently we have fifty children enrolled in the program with a two-year waiting list in some classrooms.
- In 2001, Pastor Laura Hogleund began a ministry to serve the needy in our community which has grown to the current Hope's Front Door.
- In 2010 our congregation voted to become an Open and Affirming church.
- In 2014, we started live streaming our church services for homebound members. Today we reach people worldwide.
- In 2020, we purchased the property adjoining our church. We are now in the process of evaluating how to best utilize the property in ways that will benefit our congregation and our surrounding Downers Grove community.

Pastoral History

Senior Pastors

and Additional Clergy

(Last 30 years) (all had UCC Standing)

| | Term | Years |
|---|--------------|-------|
| Rev. Dr. Robert D. Schieler <i>(Senior)</i> | 1976-1992 | 17 |
| Rev. Laura S. Hogleund <i>(Associate)</i> | 1976-2009 | 33 |
| Rev. William C. Hogleund <i>(Associate)</i> | 1976-1982 | 7 |
| Rev. Linda Cohen <i>(Associate)</i> | 1983-1987 | 5 |
| Rev. Gregory J. Martin <i>(Associate)</i> | 1987-1993 | 7 |
| Rev. Dr. Robert M. Baker <i>(Senior, Interim)</i> | 1993 | 1 |
| Rev. William C. Hogleund <i>(Senior)</i> | 1993-2009 | 16 |
| Rev. William B. Terry <i>(Associate)</i> | 1995-1999 | 5 |
| Rev. Cathy Sanders <i>(Commissioned)</i> | 2000-Present | 23 |
| Rev. Nayiri Karjian <i>(Senior, Interim)</i> | 2010-2012 | 2 |
| Rev. Scott Oberle <i>(Senior)</i> | 2012-Present | 11 |
| Rev. Rix Thorsell <i>(Associate)</i> | 2013-2015 | 2 |
| Rev. Kimberlee Whisler-Vasko <i>(Associate)</i> | 2017 | 1 |
| Rev. Michelle McNamara <i>(Transitional Pastor)</i> | 2019-Present | 4 |

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

Our congregation has learned that a good relationship between our Pastors, our staff, and our congregation needs to be continually nourished. To that end, one of our teams is the Pastoral Relations Team made up of church members selected by the council and called Pastors solely for the purpose of encouraging constructive communication in a safe space. This inclusive approach allows everyone a chance to be heard in a setting designed to address areas of misunderstanding and conflict before they affect the entire congregation.

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

Yes. We can discuss this in person.

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? A Fitness review was conducted after a resignation. We can discuss this in person.

4: Who Is Our Neighbor

4a Community Vision

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

Our congregation has a long-standing history of mission and justice and extending outward in service and advocacy. Our founders operated a station on the Underground Railway in the 19th century. We mobilized in the 1960s with the civil rights movement. We have been advocating for LGBTQ2IA+ rights since the 1970s.

We have acted as an overnight shelter with PADS, served at the Greater Chicago Food Depository, and partnered with Night Ministry, Bridge Communities, Warrenville Youth Detention Center, and DuPage United. The PADS shelters have transitioned to providing hotel rooms and apartments and our Youth Group delivers hot meals monthly to 130 families in that hotel. [\(See Appendix A\)](#)

Early in the COVID pandemic, a group of high-school students and their parents began serving hot meals from their cars to some of our housing and food-insecure neighbors. At the same time, our church started Monday Meals, making and serving sack lunches and distributing toiletries, clothing, and gift cards to those in need. Eventually, our groups joined together and merged with other churches, individuals, and community organizations to create The Community Kitchen in one of the buildings on our newly expanded campus. Hot breakfasts and dinners were made available for pick-up, seven days a week; more than 16,200 meals were served during the two years we operated.

We converted our Little Free Library into a Little Free Pantry and partnered with the Downers Grove Public Library to move this pantry indoors in the winter.

This call to service and advocacy, mission and justice speaks directly to our UCCDG vision: A more just, compassionate world, united in God's love.

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

UCCDG has had regular involvement/interaction in both the Fox Valley Association and the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ. We annually elect two lay delegates to represent us at scheduled meetings of both bodies, including ecclesiastical councils and installations/ordinations within the Association. We have hosted special events and both the spring business meeting and fall Association meeting of the Fox Valley Association. One of these was an Illinois Conference forum on racism, with a Fox Valley Justice and Witness workshop that featured ways for our covenanted churches to get involved on pressing issues such as ending bail bonds, gun violence, and climate change, among other topics.

We are currently laying the groundwork for becoming a WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged) congregation as a commitment to mental health justice.

We have had members serve on the conference Mission Support Committee, and who chaired the Outdoor Ministry Committee and the Association's Committee on Ministry. Our Senior Pastor chaired the Association's Justice and Witness Committee. We give annually to Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM) and the other special offerings of the denomination. We are a 5 For 5 Church in giving.

We have used our Conference's church camps for confirmation and youth group retreats and for family camping weekends (Tower Hill, Pilgrim Park). Members of our church have been delegates and visitors to General Synod meetings. Our insurance for staff members and for our property is through UCC offerings, and our endowment funds are invested through United Church Funds.

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. Check any statements below that apply to your UCC faith community. For full descriptions, please visit ucc.org.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible to All (A2A) | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Peace |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Creation Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Global Mission Church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Justice | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open and Affirming (ONA) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faithful and Welcoming | <input type="checkbox"/> WISE Congregation for Mental Health |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> God Is Still Speaking (GISS) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other UCC designations: |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Border and Immigrant Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Designations from other denominations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inter-cultural/Multi-racial (I’M) | <input type="checkbox"/> None |

Reflect on what the above statement(s) mean(s) to your community.

Is your congregation interested in working toward any of the above statements of witness in the near future?

With a vision of a more just, compassionate world, united in God's love, one of the cornerstones of UCCDG is Mission and Justice for all God's people. We are an Open and Affirming congregation. We value the dignity and purpose for each of God's children affirming that all are made in the image of God's love.

UCCDG is a strong supporter of Creation Justice. Our church was the second church in the UCC Denomination to divest our endowment funds from fossil fuels. We organized trips to support the movement at the Standing Rock Reservation to oppose the Dakota Access Pipeline and stand in support with Native American communities. In addition, we have been locally involved in climate change education initiatives.

We have explored being a Just Peace church and formed a team to begin the process of becoming a WISE congregation. We host NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) DuPage mental health events in our church in response to a growing need in our community.

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

Locally we've worked ecumenically to bring denominations together for semi-regular clergy gatherings and shared mission work within Downers Grove. We've taken the lead in fighting to repeal a Storm Water Tax on churches and not-for-profit organizations. We share combined community worship services for Thanksgiving and Good Friday and participate in the Rotary GroveFest celebration (a summer outdoor festival).

In 1986 we also were one of the first two churches in DuPage County to partner with and co-found DuPage PADS for the homeless and working poor. We shared this work with over sixteen other communities of faith and our local high school, Rotary, and civic groups. Students set up and took down the sleeping pads and other shelter supplies. Local churches and synagogues cooked dinners and provided overnight crews for our guests' needs. These partners joined with us in raising funds to expand our facilities so that we could provide handicap accessible showers, laundry service, breakfast, and bagged lunch and dinners to all our guests. We continue to support DuPage PADS in its current iteration, the Interim Housing Center.

We lead The Community Kitchen, a coalition of churches which serves our community. See Section 3A.

In 2019 we joined DuPage United to work with our Muslim, Christian, Jewish brothers and sisters as well as civic organizations to organize and pool our resources and power to enact change in our communities.

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

Our Mission Statement is to “Connect people with God and one another to serve, live, and love – guided by Christ.” This statement was thoughtfully and prayerfully created and guides everything we do.

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?

We encourage our Pastors to live our mission beyond our walls. Their faith may call them to participate in local school events, to protest unjust conditions, or to attend ecumenical clergy gatherings. We wholeheartedly support these efforts.

As a just congregation, we offer our Pastors a just salary, benefits, flexibility, and support of the lay leadership to balance the intense demands on their time. We recognize that our pastors have families, friends, and homes of their own. Their covenant with the church is only one covenant they share in life, and we recognize that for our pastoral staff to model a healthy, balanced life, we must respect their time constraints, days off, and sabbatical time.

The Pastoral Relations Committee and Personnel Team encourage Pastors to set boundaries, delegate, and use all the time off to which they are entitled. Consultations with the Pastoral Relations Committee are encouraged to alleviate any feelings of being overwhelmed or stressed.

The church lay leadership supports its pastoral staff during times of sabbatical, continuing professional education, and time to rejuvenate and recuperate on vacation with their families on many levels. During vacations and sabbaticals, both staff and lay leadership plan ahead for a Pastor’s absence, assigning others to assume the many duties a Pastor handles, as well as any emergency that arises. Guest preachers are scheduled, the Worship and Arts Ministry plans worship services, and staff take on additional hours as needed.

4b. MissionInsite

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

UCCDG is located in the village of Downers Grove, and borders six communities: the city of Darien and the villages of Lisle, Lombard, Oak Brook, Westmont, and Woodridge. Downers Grove is an established suburb in DuPage County, 22 miles west of Chicago. The Mission Insite report only covers the zip code of 60515 which is half of Downers Grove.

Compared to Illinois overall and the United States -

- Downers Grove is a significantly wealthier suburb.
- Household income, educational attainment, and employment rates are higher
- The poverty rate is less than half that of the state and country.
- The median age is slightly older
- The village is less diverse across most races
- There are more English-only speaking households
- There are considerably fewer households where a language other than English is spoken.

Westmont is more racially diverse than the surrounding communities with the lowest median household income (\$76,543), the highest poverty rate (11.4%), and a lower educational attainment (Bachelor's degree or higher: 48.6%) than surrounding areas. With such close proximity to Downers Grove, Westmont represents an opportunity to live our values of embracing diversity, valuing all people, and serving our local communities.

2020 and 2021 US Census data show the following summary demographics for Downers Grove.

Population: 50,247

Median Household Income: \$105,217

Employment Rate: 63%

Poverty Rate: 5.2%

Bachelor's Degree or Higher: 59.8%

Median Age: 42.8

Population by Race:

White – 81.9%

Black or African American – 3.7%

American Indian and Alaska Native – 0.2%

Asian – 5.9%

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander – 0%

Some Other Race – 1.6%

Two or More Races – 6.7%

Population by Ethnicity:

Hispanic or Latino – 6.8%

Not Hispanic or Latino – 80.2%

English-only speaking households: 85.5%

Language other than English spoken at home: 14.5%

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?

Our church membership is a blend of white-collar professionals with blue-collar laborers and is predominantly White (90+%) along with Asian American, African American, Hispanic American and Native American members. This racial mix mirrors our immediate surrounding communities of Lisle, Lombard, Oak Brook, Westmont, Darien, and Woodridge with slightly different percentages.

We are more liberal and progressive than much of our surrounding area. We use our time, talents and treasure to reach our helping hands both outward and upward to those in need around us regardless of their background. We live our Mission, Vision, and Values statement as we continue to become a more Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive (EDI) congregation.

Downers Grove's adjacent communities are also more affluent than the rest of Illinois and the US. This includes higher median incomes and employment rates, lower poverty rates, and remarkably higher educational attainment rates of at least a Bachelor's degree. The village of Downers Grove is the least racially diverse of the seven communities, and Westmont and Woodridge are the most diverse.

Downers Grove is most similar to Lisle and Darien when comparing income and education. Lombard, Westmont, and Woodridge have lower household incomes and less educational attainment than Downers Grove. Of note, Woodridge has the lowest poverty rate of the seven communities, at 4.5%.

It is worth noting the two "outlier" communities reached by UCCDG: Westmont and Oakbrook. Both villages are east of Downers Grove but represent very different communities. Oak Brook is the smallest and wealthiest community (median income: \$146,409), and most highly educated (67.3% with at least a Bachelor's degree). Oak Brook is also older with a median age of 53.9, has the largest Asian population of the six communities (32.8.%), and has the highest percentage of languages other than English spoken at home (36.5%).

By comparison, Westmont is more racially diverse than the surrounding communities, as mentioned. The village has the lowest median household income (\$76,543), the highest poverty rate (11.4%), and lower educational attainment (Bachelor's degree or higher: 48.6%) than surrounding areas. With such close proximity to Downers Grove, Westmont represents an opportunity for outreach and service through our church.

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

Hope's Front Door (HFD) is an excellent example of how the demographics of our community shape our ministries. Former Associate Pastor Laura Hoglund led a group of local clergy and community activists to create this ministry 22 years ago to better serve people who were turning to individual churches for assistance.

Today, HFD is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, supported by numerous area churches including ours, foundations, businesses, community organizations and individual donors. In 2022, HFD served approximately 6,500 individuals & families - a 51% increase in the total number of households served and 102% increase in the number of new households served compared to the previous year.

Our Senior Pastor, Scott Oberle, currently serves on the HFD board. Several of our church members volunteer at HFD, helping residents access food and transportation as well as health and wellness services. Our church and its members participate in fundraising activities, school supply and coat drives, and serve as volunteers in their Pathways programs, which teach money management and life skills to help residents change their own life's trajectory. HFD contracts significant office space on the 6th floor of our church building.

Demographics and urgent need shaped the creation of The Community Kitchen (see Section 3A) and our involvement and support of DuPage PADS.

With our surrounding community of DuPage County having approximately 73,000 people living below the poverty line with many more on the edge, our work with The Community Kitchen and PADS is a clear reflection of the growing needs of people in crisis for mental health, food and housing insecurity.

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

“You are from the church that cares.”

“It is pretty incredible what your church does in this community. I had no idea that you were here until I needed help.”

“I wish our church did more things like this. You guys actually help people physically – isn’t that what following Jesus is all about, helping people in need?”

From the Village Council and Mayor: “We came to you first to talk about homelessness and maybe solicit some help from you and your perspective because we know your church has always been active in this kind of work in our community.”

Due to the cordial relationship that we have with the Mayor of Downers Grove, Robert Barnett, we asked him to respond to this question directly. Here is his response:

When we think of UCCDG we think of part of the core of our community. Physically in the Central Business District, the UCCDG is immediately and physically connected with the heart of our community. And UCCDG is a reliable partner in creating an environment of acceptance and care for all within Downers Grove. Beyond the daily spiritual care of its members, UCCDG is often at the center and exhibits leadership in caring for our community. From hosting public forums to feeding and sheltering our less fortunate, to creating a space and fostering the arts ... UCCDG is part of what defines Downers Grove.

*Robert T. Barnett, Mayor
Village of Downers Grove*

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

Many of our new members used to be Catholic and were looking for something else. Here are the themes we heard (the top three are what I hear the most):

1. Love the sermons.
2. Impressed with our social justice outreach efforts (PADS, etc.).
3. Different faith background, looking for a more accepting church/theology.
4. Friendly people.
5. Know somebody who goes there.
6. Love the music.
7. Open and Affirming.

5: References

Reference 1:

Rev. Paige Wolfanger
Pastor, Congregational Church of Batavia
847-309-1613 (Cell)
pastorpaige@congregationalchurch.org

Reference 2:

Mary Ann Smith, Downers Grove community member
630-964-8173 (Cell)
carlmaryannsmith@aol.com

Reference 3:

Rev. David Bebb Jones
Retired Presbyterian Pastor (who served 30 years in neighboring Western Springs (1970-2000))
630-769-6070 (Home)
815-545-5200 (Cell)
dbebbjones@gmail.com

(See included letters)

Perspective as a Reference – Pastor Paige Wolfanger

I can recommend, without hesitation, the good folks at The First Congregational Church, Downers Grove, both the parishioners and the staff.

Although I am not an “official” member of this amazing congregation, I do feel I have my finger on the proverbial pulse of the faith community, because I’m married to the Transitional Pastor who is working with them right now. This means I often get to attend worship, fellowship, and educational events with the congregation, as well as sometimes get the opportunity to work with the staff. (I, too, am an ordained pastor in the UCC, and have been invited to collaborate with UCCDG in producing devotionals, leading Bible studies, planning educational offerings, and helping as they reach out to all of their neighbors in love and grace.) And I can attest to the fact that these people are alive with the Spirit! They are warm and welcoming without fail, intelligent and biblically versed, committed to justice and kindness, and dedicated to the spiritual growth and well-being of all their members, from the youngest to the oldest. They are also inventive and creative when it comes to how they approach worship and education, two areas that have been especially affected by the pandemic. They are, as a whole, dedicated to the values of Shalom, and work to live and Pastor with authenticity, integrity, and faith in God.

The beating heart of this faith family is its staff. They are to a person creative, intelligent, reliable, blessed with humor, and faithful to the mission to which they have been called. Perhaps the most important thing is that they communicate with one another often, honestly, and well. This allows them to be all pulling in the same direction, regardless of their area of expertise and vocation. They share a vision, and come together with their various gifts and graces to make it happen. Anyone who answers the call to this position will be joining, in the staff and in the larger church itself, a family...not perfect or without flaw, but committed to being together, as the Body of Christ is called to be. Working with First Congregational Downers Grove will be a blessing and a joy.

Perspective as a Reference – Mary Ann Smith

I am writing, as a member of the community and a member of a companion Christian church in Downers Grove to give you my impressions of UCCDG.

I have lived in Downers Grove, within two blocks of UCCDG, for over 40 years. I think one of this church's strengths is its commitment to the community over these many years. It has been a real witnessing presence, providing many ministries to the people of Downers Grove. It had an opportunity several years ago to move out of the downtown area, but chose to stay downtown.

The following will give you an idea of the breadth of its outreach. This church has provided winter overnight shelter accommodations for the county's homeless for decades (PADS). It provides facilities for many self-help groups and continues to be the site of the Two-Way Street Coffee House on Friday nights. Through the senior pastor, UCCDG has been instrumental in arranging for the 4th of July and Thanksgiving Day ecumenical services. These programs reach many different "sets" of individuals that bring them into contact with the facilities, personnel, and services of UCCDG.

My most significant experience with UCCDG was a years-long working relationship with the PADS Program (overnight shelter). Although my church helped with only two or three Mondays per year, UCCDG was committed to the program serving every Monday night/Tuesday morning from October through March each year. Their local volunteer contingent reliably staffed the shelter every week, providing supervision during check-in, dinner and bedtime, breakfast and clean-up.

I was always impressed with the helpfulness and positive attitudes of the UCCDG members who supported the program. Their dedication was obvious as they were the same people over many years. Knowing that UCCDG's help was constant made our annual renewal of support easier to continue. I was also impressed with the UCCDG's commitment to remodel and upgrade their facilities in support of PADS after a devastating flood in the building several years ago. PADS contributed, local congregations helped, but the leadership of UCCDG made it happen.

My one suggestion for an area of improvement is one I think is needed in all organized religious communities and that is spreading the word of how we share the gospel in this noisy world. UCCDG does many good and wonderful things but sometimes, I think, it keeps its light under the basket. I think their influence in the community could be greater than it is with more publicity, more engagement with the local businesses and government. Since I am not a user of social media, it may be that they already do much in that sphere. I, however, think that there are still opportunities to be had in promoting the good that they do.

As you can discern from the above, my experiences and impressions of UCCDG are extremely positive. I think this church lives the gospel in the ministries that it delivers to the people of Downers Grove. My prayers and best wishes as you consider your response to this opportunity.

Perspective as a Reference - Rev. David Bebb Jones

I am not an active participant in the UCCDG, but I am happy to comment on my understanding, knowledge and appreciation of the congregation as a friend of the congregation and as a father and grandfather of members of the church.

Areas of Strength:

- 1) Vibrant and relevant worship that is theologically progressive with prophetic preaching, beautiful as well as meaningful music related to the themes of worship. During the pandemic there was imaginative and stimulating technology for their worship.
- 2) Daily devotions by Pastoral staff during the pandemic that has continued - this was very impressive and unique in my experience during the challenges of the pandemic with a new inspirational message to look forward to every day.
- 3) Extraordinary outreach and service to the Downers Grove community along with a positive, challenging, and relevant focus on national and international issues. Most recently during the pandemic, there was a definitive sense of care and involvement for the homeless and marginalized. I am very impressed by the initiation and support for The Community Kitchen and its evolving and continuing service through multiple resources.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- 1) Not being a member or regular participant, I hesitate to comment on these needs, but am aware of challenges to all churches as a result of the pandemic, which include finances and concerns for “reengaging full membership in activities and ministries”.
- 2) Our daughter and granddaughter were very active in UCCDG’s Youth Group during a period of a very involved group that graduated in 2019 and now there is the challenge of rebuilding the youth ministry, which obviously involves this pastoral position.
- 3) Our grandson attended the Confirmation Class and chose not to become a member of the church. His age group was small and not very involved, and he has not maintained an active relationship with the church. Now, at college age he is struggling in his life. It is surely not the fault of the church, but an area of possible outreach.

Experience in the Congregation:

- 1) As mentioned, my closest relationship is through the membership and participation in UCCDG of our daughter and granddaughter (now away in college). For both, this congregation has been very meaningful, and the youth experience was very important and pivotal in providing mission giving opportunities at the local, Chicago and national levels through youth mission trips.
- 2) Finally, I have great respect for UCCDG and admire its open and inclusive message and outreach to all persons. We need examples like this in church and community, especially in our time!

6: Closing Thoughts

Closing Prayer

Into Your hands we place this Profile report. You have blessed this Search Committee through every step of the journey. We have called on You and You answered our prayers. We asked You for guidance and You provided. We needed time to prepare our hearts and minds and it was given through Your goodness.

We ask that You will call the person with the gifts needed to help our Church continue to do Your work in this world so that we can make it that much brighter and more meaningful to those who live in our community across town or on the other side of the world! Yet not our own will be done, but Yours. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

6b. Statement of Consent

The covenantal relationship between a church and those called by that church to serve as pastors and teachers and in other Pastoral 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 a suitable new Pastor 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.

Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile? *Members of the Pastor of Faith Formation, Search Committee - Virginia Hopley, Jim Hallman, Barb Hammack, Susan Keys, Amy Rettberg, Pam Toleikis, Dave Humphreys, Senior Pastor Scott Oberle, Transitional Pastor Michelle McNamara, Church Administrator Martin Pazdioch. Church Members: David Burke, Mary Dove, Brett Johnson, Kimberly Rutter, Linda Schranz, Mary Vercellino, and Dave Williams. Community: Mayor Robert T. Barnett, Village of Downers Grove. References: Pastor Page Wolfanger, Mary Ann Smith, Reverend David Bebb Jones.*

Editor: Christine Niels

Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

Signed:

Virginia Hopley, Chair –Pastor of Faith Formation Search Committee

Date

6c. Validation by Conference/Association

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

Staff Comment: YES

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

Staff Comment: YES

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

Staff Comment: YES

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature: *Rev. Shernell J. Edney Stilley*

Name / Title: Rev. Shernell J. Edney Stilley / ACM for Pastoral Transitions

Email: shernelledneystilley@ilucc.org

Phone: 708-701-4933

Date: June 17, 2024

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

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



Appendix A: Mission and Justice Ministries

Our Ministry of Mission and Justice is called to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the modern world.

Environmental Stewardship

- **Caring for Creation**

This team educates the congregation on climate and environmental issues and encourages environmentally friendly practices in our own facility.

Community Outreach

- **Two Way Street Coffee House**

Since 1970, this community project has hosted local and global artists in weekly concerts, plus open mics, jam sessions, sing-alongs, and old-time barn dances.

- **Annual Garage Sale**

This annual sale is an important fundraiser, a way to bring the community into our church, a means for those with limited means to find bargains, and a fun time for our volunteers to work together.

Ministering to the Underserved

- **DuPage PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter)**

We hosted homeless families one night a week for dinner, overnight, showers, laundry, breakfast, and a bag lunch for 34 years. Post-pandemic, this program now houses these neighbors in apartments and hotels.

- **Community Kitchen**

We lead a group of local churches serving hot meals to food and housing insecure guests. Each church hosts one night a week in their own church. We also operate a pantry, stocked with non-perishable food, clothing items, and toiletries and serves anyone in our community in need.

- **Hope's Front Door**

Founded by our church, this walk-in ministry serves area residents who need immediate assistance with food, transportation, healthcare, and pathways to self-sufficiency. Over 6,000 were served in 2022.

- **Bridge Communities**

Our church partners with this DuPage County organization, providing mentors and an apartment to a family in need as they work through a two-year program toward self-sufficiency.

- **Night Ministry**

We provide volunteers and sandwiches monthly to this Chicago organization that provides housing, healthcare, and human connection to those struggling with poverty and homelessness.

- **Greater Chicago Food Depository (GCFD)**

Volunteers from our church visit this food bank to repack bulk food into smaller packages that are then distributed to food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters.

- **Mission Trips**

Each year, both youth and adults meet those in need and grow in faith with mission trips to many US cities, and globally in South Africa, Haiti, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Israel, and other countries.

Social Justice

- **Direct Trade Commerce**

During coffee hour, we serve fair trade coffees to help farmers earn a living wage.

- **Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW)/Alliance for Fair Food**

Our church supports the Alliance for Fair Food and the CIW, a farmworker-based human rights organization headquartered in Immokalee, Florida, joining boycotts, petition drives, and marches.

- **Prison Ministry**

Each week, church volunteers teach life skills to imprisoned youth at the Warrenville Detention Center. We also educate the congregation on social justice issues such as mass incarceration and bail bond inequity.

- **LGBTQ2IA+ Activism**

We participate in Pride activities, are members of the Chicago Coalition of Welcoming Churches, and proudly fly a rainbow flag in front of our church. We work with EQuality Downers Grove (EQDG)..

- **DuPage United**

We work with other institutions on issues and initiatives that include affordable housing, mental health as related to criminal justice reform, and gun violence and safety.

- **Immigration Issues**

We are members of the DuPage Immigrant Ministry working with Immigrant Solidarity DuPage to educate the congregation and community about issues facing the immigrant community.

The personal relationships formed between our members and those we serve are crucial and life changing for all parties involved. The development of relationships between ourselves and individuals from other churches, synagogues, mosques, other community organizations is just as important. The building of these relationships is what gives our ministries strength and life.

“What does God require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?”
Micah 6:8