

Name of Church

Southwood UCC

Address7904 Raytown Rd
Raytown, MO 64138**Conference:**

Missouri Mid-South

Association:

Western

Title

Associate Minister

Start Date

Apr 2, 2025

Description

We are searching for an Associate Minister to work full time alongside of our very talented Senior Minister. We have never had an Associate Minister before and we are excited to offer this position as we look for new ways to Be The Church in 2025! We are looking for someone who will work alongside of our current pastor as he transitions from full time to part time ministry. We are excited about the future for our wonderful, progressive, ONA congregation in the Kansas City area.

Church Contact Information

(314) 918-2605 (Business)

damien@mmsucc.org (Email Address)

Listing Information**Web Presences**

<https://thatchurch.us/> Type: Professional

<https://www.facebook.com/wearethatchurch> Type: Professional

<https://www.youtube.com/@ThatChurchIsSouthwoodUCC> Type: Professional

Additional Formal Ecumenical Affiliations

No response

UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person**Name:**

No response

Title:

No response

Phone:

No response

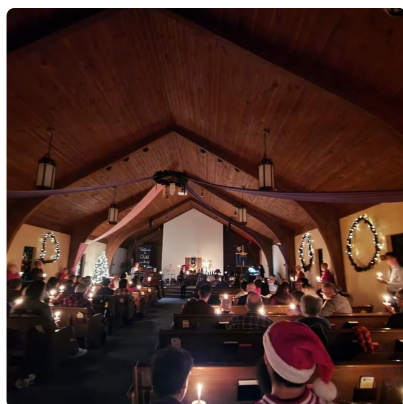
Email:

No response

Summary Ministry Description

Southwood U.C.C., a.k.a. "That Church," is a dynamic and growing Open and Affirming church in Kansas City with a strong commitment to teaching a progressive theology and seeking social justice. We are wanting to explore new models for ministry and are ready to call our first ever full-time Associate Pastor. Our Lead Pastor, Rev. Michael Stephens, has been here 22 years and is now going to focus mostly on preaching, leading worship and pastoral care. We are looking for someone to partner with him with a focus on congregational care, children and youth ministries and overseeing administrative details. We are also wanting to empower this person to pursue their own particular passions in ministry. This position offers an opportunity to be a part of a loving congregation and further grow into ministry in a rich environment. Southwood is a community open to change and always willing to try new things. Our highway billboard sign once asked: What church... welcomes gay families, encourages questions, empowers women, honors many paths to God and seeks social justice? That's when ThatChurch.us became our website. Our G.I.F.T.S. acronym describes us well as we Give to those in need, Invest in the wider church, Fellowship in Community, Teach a progressive theology and Seek social justice and peace. Would you like to join us on this journey?

Church pictures



What we value about living in our area.

Kansas City, the City of Fountains, is the largest city in Missouri and keeps being discovered as an exciting place to visit or raise a family. From the KC Royals World Series runs in 2014 and 2015 to the KC Chiefs Super Bowls in 2020, 2021, 2023 and 2024, and the building of the KC Current Stadium, the first stadium built specifically for a women's team in the world, people are taking notice of Kansas City. The entire United Church of Christ will discover this when they come here for General Synod in July of 2025. We have wonderful restaurants, museums, festivals, arts centers, family activities and sports. KC is especially known for its BBQ and jazz scene. Raytown is one of the older suburbs just southeast of downtown Kansas City and the Plaza. We are also right next to growing suburbs like Lee's Summit and Blue Springs. We have excellent schools from pre-school all the way up to college and graduate programs. Midwestern friendliness is waiting to welcome people here.

Current size of membership

190

Average in person attendance

98

Does your church hold virtual worship services?

Yes

Choose platform type(s) and number for virtual worship.

Video Hosting Platform

On average, how many views are received per service?

40

Languages used in ministry

English

Position Title

Associate Minister

Position Duration

Settled

Compensation Level

Full Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines?

Yes

Link to current Conference guidelines

[🔗 Download compensation guidelines](#)**Scope of Work**

Some fields reference [The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ](#).

The United Church of Christ recognizes *The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers* in the formation of ministers, in the practice of active ministry, and throughout life. For the purposes of completing a denominational Profile, ministers are asked to spend some time with the *Marks*.

The Scope of Work developed by our church using the [Call Agreement Workbook](#).

[🔗 Download scope of Work](#)

3 core competencies that we imagine could be foundational in our next minister's relationship with the church.

First:

Faith Formation & Vitality: Our Associate Pastor will design and lead our faith formation programs for our children, youth and their families. We have tried a variety of programs from age-based individual classes to rotational models of exploration. We devote one Sunday a month to an intergenerational experience driven by the idea that we are a village that needs those kinds of encounters. We are open to whatever wisdom and ideas a new pastor can bring.

Second:

Pastoral Care: Our Associate Pastor will work with our Lead Pastor and others to be sure that people in the church with special needs are being cared for. This will include personal visits in the hospital and at the homes of those who cannot make it to church. The Lead Pastor will also do some of this work, but the Associate Pastor will organize a team of others who can help make regular visits.

Third:

Building Transformational Leadership: Our Associate Pastor will have several administrative roles related to social media and general church organization. They will participate with an Advisory Team to continually discuss visitors, those who are sick, worship format, upcoming events and publicity. They will also have the freedom to do some tasks themselves or organize lay leaders to do some of the tasks.

Compensation and Support

The salary basis comes from the [Call Agreement Workbook](#), equal to Cash Salary plus Value of Parsonage/ Housing Allowance. The Conference can assist in determining these amounts or provide a worksheet to be used to calculate these values.



SALARY AND BENEFITS OFFERED: SALARY BASIS: ITEM OFFERED	AMOUNT OR PERCENTAGE(If DETERMINED)	IS THIS NEGOTIABLE	PASTORAL CANDIDATE DETERMINES
Salary (Cash basis determined from Conference/ Association Guidelines)	60220	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing Allowance	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Any Experiential Difference (Related to years of experience)	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Salary Basis: 60220			
Pension/Annuity	9129	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Security and Medicare Offset	4987	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical/Dental Insurance	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life Insurance	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability Insurance	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worker's Compensation	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If needed, please comment further on your church's salary and benefits for the minister.

The range for the entire compensation package (including salary, housing allowance, pension and social security offset) will be negotiated based on experience and skills. The minister will decide how much of their base salary is to be treated as housing allowance. We can also negotiate financial assistance for medical expenses and insurance premiums based on need.

The expected living situation for our next minister.

Living within 20 minutes of the church and receiving a housing allowance

If a parsonage is provided, will the church offer a home equity allowance to the pastor? (The recommended guidelines for a home equity allowance is equal to 1.5% of the average home value in the community; this is considered taxable to the minister. The Housing Equity Offset should not be calculated into the Salary Basis upon which other Benefits are determined. Churches should consult a tax advisor prior to establishing any account for an equity allowance to ensure compliance with IRS rules on nonqualified deferred compensation plans.)

No

No response

How our church will adopt part-time adjustments in the pastoral schedule to support a minister's bi-vocational employment.

No response

Additional reimbursements the next Pastor can expect to receive as part of their employment:

Reimbursement for use of personal vehicle.

Conference and/or Association meeting registrations

Other meeting registrations (or educational requirement registrations).

Peer and professional supports available for ministers in our association/conferences.

The Missouri Mid-South Conference has a youth leaders team that meets monthly. We have a UCC clergy cluster in Kansas City. The conference has a weekly Zoom support group for clergy. We are still trying to find a new normal after the pandemic, but the conference usually offers clergy retreats

along with our annual meetings.

Who Is God Calling to Minister with Us?

The ministry goals we envision our next minister collaborating with the congregation to achieve.

With our Lead Pastor of 22 years turning his focus to leading worship and preaching, we are in need of a full-time pastor to pull all the various threads of ministry together to keep things running smoothly. This new position will ensure that all of our different ministry teams are communicating with one another. They will also be the coordinator of all of our children and youth activities. And they will work with the Lead Pastor in being sure that everyone who needs pastoral care is receiving regular visits. While these three main things will take some time, we hope this new person will use the rest of their time to lead us into new areas of mission that fit with their own vision and passion. This new model for ministry should allow us to change and expand our ministry outreach. Of course, there will be opportunities to participate in worship every week and preach on a regular basis. We think Southwood is poised for a new season of growth and are looking for someone to partner with us and lead us in these next steps on our journey.

How our vision of the minister we are now seeking will assist the congregation in making an impact beyond its walls.

Southwood is uniquely positioned to reach new families that are tired or wary of old Christian dogma that focuses more on guilt and exclusion than love and inclusion. We need to find new ways to engage with these families. When people find us, they usually comment that they had no idea there were churches like ours. Southwood's progressive theology makes this a spiritual home for LGBTQ persons and anyone who feels like they are in exile.

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

We are basically English speaking. Our mission trips to Guatemala give us a chance to practice our Spanish, and our refugee family from the Congo speaks French but mostly does well with English.

One "language" we are still working on is the use of a person's preferred pronouns. We have pronoun labels that people can put on their nametags. The other important "language" is a comfort level with many different forms of technology.

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

1. Building Transformational Leadership: The Church is going to change over the next 20 years. We do not know exactly what that will look like, but we need leaders who are willing to explore new models for ministry and being church. We hope this new pastor will bring new ideas and vision so we can evolve into who we are called to be for tomorrow.
2. Strengthening Inter- and Intra- Personal Assets: Southwood is a village. Our Lead Pastor spent his sabbatical studying the ways the intergenerational interactions help build the community for all ages. Pastoral Care through all of the seasons of life will continue to be essential to what it means to be church. We need someone to take the lead in this area and possibly train others to provide care for everyone in our village.
3. Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice: Southwood believes that Pentecost is the most important Christian holiday. The truth of our faith is in discovering that the same Spirit that was in Christ Jesus now resides in us. We want a pastor who is in sync with God's Spirit and leads and lives from that place.
4. Working Together for Justice and Mercy: We need a voice in society pushing back against wealth, patriarchy and racism (to name a few). We come to Southwood to be nurtured and encouraged to go out and make a difference in the world. We are looking for someone committed to social justice and able to equip us for the days ahead.

Who Is God Calling Us to Become?

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

Who God is calling us to become as a congregation.

Honestly, we do not know. We will continue to be a progressive presence in our community, but we know that Church will greatly change in the next thirty or so years. We are called to be responsive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. We need to be careful that we do not have any sacred cows holding us back from change, experimentation and faithfulness. We probably need to be more bold in spreading the word that we exist. We may also need to focus our outreach toward groups that will find "that church" to be exactly what they are looking for. The key is being open to God's leading wherever that may take us.

How God is calling us to reach out to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of our community and congregation.

Before the pandemic, we tried to start a new church model on Wednesday nights that involved having people gather around a meal and have open discussions. We had a good start but not much growth beyond the original group. The pandemic ultimately brought that experiment to an end. We can affirm that we are willing to try new things and move on when things do not quite work out as expected. Our designation as a Creation Justice Congregation happened in the last year. This was the culmination of a lot planning and work by over twenty people. We have analyzed how Creation Justice is reflected in our worship, fellowship and engagement outside of the church. Our ministry has been significantly shaped by this intense process. Our Green Justice Team continues to meet and envision ways we can participate in spreading the word and healing the Earth.

Congregation Reflections

We would describe our congregation's life of faith as...

At Southwood UCC, our faith is a vibrant tapestry woven with love, inclusivity, and commitment to social justice. As an Open & Affirming congregation, we don't just welcome those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender—we celebrate them as children of God, just as they are. Here, diversity is cherished, and everyone finds a place to belong. In our worship services, God is described as loving, inclusive, faithful, and present. We celebrate God's boundless love and acceptance, recognizing God's presence in every moment. The Holy Spirit moves among us, providing guidance, wisdom, comfort, and strength, and fostering unity and fellowship. We believe the Holy Spirit empowers us for ministry, equipping us to serve and bring God's love and justice into the world. Our faith is marked by radical hospitality, inquisitive exploration, committed service, and a profound respect for the diverse ways people experience the divine. This dynamic approach ensures our congregation is a place of personal growth, communal harmony, and impactful action in the world.

Strengths or positive qualities of our congregation.

One core aspect of our faith community is the encouragement of questions. Many of us have experienced environments where beliefs were dictated and personal exploration was limited. At Southwood, we embrace the mysteries of life and faith, recognizing that no single tradition has all the answers. Our community offers a safe space to explore these questions together, aiming to live out answers that bring more love, life, peace, and justice to the world.

Our commitment to social justice is a cornerstone of our faith. We feel called to make a tangible difference in the world, whether by feeding hungry children, providing shelter to the homeless, or uplifting emergent/developing communities. Our church actively engages in works of compassion and justice, striving to reflect the love of God in every action.

Additionally, Southwood UCC honors many paths to God. While we follow the lead of Jesus Christ, we do not believe he is the only way to experience God's presence. We respect the spirit of life and love in many religions, and through dialogue with people of other faiths, we enrich our understanding and grow together in our spiritual journeys.

A growing edge for our congregation and what we plan to strengthen as a congregation

A growing edge for our congregation is ensuring we don't rest on our laurels regarding our Open & Affirming status. While we celebrate our inclusivity and the welcoming environment we have cultivated, it is vital that we continue to evolve and move where the Spirit directs us. Our goal is to be a welcoming community for even more people, broadening our embrace and finding new ways to reach out to those who feel marginalized or overlooked.

As we look to the future, it's crucial to keep developing our vision, staying open to new ideas and opportunities that align with our mission and values. Through ongoing reflection and action, we can continue to grow as a vibrant, inclusive, and dynamic faith community.

What worship is like when our congregation gathers.

When our congregation gathers for worship, it takes place in our sanctuary, creating a sacred space for reflection and connection. We incorporate new songs and traditional hymns but often update the lyrics to reflect modern understandings and inclusivity.

Our worship is enriched by the talents of our musicians, including a classical guitarist, a pianist, and our music director who leads the singing. We use a projector to display the order of service, slides, and song lyrics, ensuring everyone can participate fully. For those who cannot join us in person, our services are streamed live on our YouTube channel, allowing our broader community to engage with us.

The sermons and messages delivered during our services are progressive, centered on love and justice rather than punishment. While they are Bible-based, they are not Bible-driven, encouraging us to explore alternative interpretations and deeper meanings within the scripture. This approach fosters a faith that is thoughtful, inclusive, and focused on living out the teachings of Jesus in ways that bring more love, peace, and justice into the world.

The educational program/faith formation vision of our church.

We have a Sunday School program for children, youth and adults. The youth have their own class and have studied "Cathedral on Fire" in 2020 and Greta Thunberg's book "No One is Too Small to Make a Difference" which was a catalyst into our church becoming a Creation Justice Church. The youth also have a flower garden on the church grounds. The younger children have at various times been divided into multiple classes or gathered as just one class. The Children's Neighborhood part of worship brings the children front and center. The adults study and discuss a variety of materials. A great entry program to progressive theology has been the "Living the Questions" DVD series which we have repeated several times.

How our congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

The Church Council of twelve people is the main decision making body. There are several Ministry Teams that do a lot of the work of the church: Mission, Christian Education, Buildings & Grounds, Worship, Green Justice and Pastoral Relations. Each team has a liaison who reports back to the church council. Communication happens through announcements at church, an email newsletter, and social media.

When it comes to decision-making, 5 hours are spent in meetings per month.

Is the pastor expected to attend all church meetings?

Yes

In times when action had to be taken quickly, for example when a crisis or disaster occurred. These were the key leaders in taking this action and this was accomplished by...

Several of us first heard of COVID-19 as we were returning from a mission trip in Guatemala. To prepare for the next Council meeting on Thursday, March 12, 2020, we asked all of our members who are medical professionals about their opinion on whether the church should continue to meet in person. At that time, they said we could still meet but that a time of not meeting in person was coming. But by that Saturday, every one of those professionals changed their mind and said we needed to stop meeting in person. The Council agreed, and on Sunday, March 15, we had worship via Facebook Live. We did that for two weeks then switched to Zoom through Easter. By then, we had a camera in place and established a YouTube channel to stream services. We remained with worship only online with lots of creative Zoom gatherings and some outside distanced and masked gatherings until June of 2021 when the Council decided it was safe for those who wanted to gather in person for worship wearing masks.

A copy of an organization structure, by laws and/or annual report to further explain the patterns of the church's activity and governance

[📎 Constitution Bylaws\(003\).doc](#)

11-Year Report

Download a copy of the 11-Year Report developed with the help of our conference staff and UCC Data Hub.

[📎 Download 11-Year Report](#)

Congregation Demographics

Describe those who participate in your church.

DEMOGRAPHIC	NUMBER
NUMBER OF ACTIVE MEMBERS:	122
NUMBER OF ACTIVE NON-MEMBERS:	12
TOTAL OF CHURCH PARTICIPANTS (SUM OF THE NUMBERS ABOVE):	134

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

No

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

TIME	PERCENTAGE
MORE THAN 10 YEARS:	41%
LESS THAN 10, MORE THAN 5 YEARS:	38%
LESS THAN 5 YEARS:	21%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

No

Number of total participants by age:

AGE	NUMBER
0-11	7
12-17	8
18-24	6
25-34	5
35-44	12
45-54	9
55-64	20
65-74	28
75+	36

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Percentage of adults in various household types:

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	PERCENTAGE
SINGLE ADULTS UNDER 35:	4%
HOUSEHOLDS WITH MINORS:	18%
SINGLE ADULTS AGE 35-65:	4%
JOINT HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO MINORS:	47%
SINGLE ADULTS OVER 65:	27%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

No

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

EDUCATION LEVEL	PERCENTAGE
HIGH SCHOOL:	9%
COLLEGE:	61%
GRADUATE SCHOOL:	27%
SPECIALTY TRAINING:	3%
OTHER EDUCATION LEVEL:	0%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

EMPLOYMENT TYPE	PERCENTAGE
ADULTS WHO ARE EMPLOYED:	39%
ADULTS WHO ARE RETIRED:	58%
ADULTS WHO ARE NOT FULLY EMPLOYED:	3%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

No

The range of occupations of working adults in the congregation:

We have a large number of retired UCC pastors which speaks highly of who we are and what we represent. We also have a doctor, many nurses, a few lawyers, many teachers, a few therapists, a few people that own their own small businesses, and slightly more white collar workers than blue collar workers.

The mix of ethnic heritages in our congregation, and the overall racial make-up.

We are predominantly a white congregation. We have ten African- Americans that are mostly connected to our church due to our ONA stance. We also have a family of six Congolese refugees who we helped bring here, house and make adjustments in order to find employment and attend school. We have five people of Asian descent and one Hispanic gentleman. While we are only 15% non-white, the Raytown community is now 44% African-American. And since KC does not have many black churches that are theologically progressive, there may be an opportunity for outreach and growth.

What diversity means in our context?

In the Greater KC area, we were the first mainline church in the suburbs to be vocally ONA & progressive. Since we took that stance, we have members from other denominations finding a more progressive home here (including Baptist, Presbyterian, Church of the Brethren, Methodist and Community of Christ). Our ONA stance and radical hospitality have led many LGBTQ people to find a home here. We presently have one transgender person and many people who identify as gay or lesbian. Some of our young people have helped us navigate areas where people do not fit into binary roles of male or female.

Has our congregation recently had a conversation about welcoming diversity, or do we plan to hold one on the near future

No

Participation and Staffing

Participation and Planning of Gatherings

WAYS OF CHURCH GATHERING	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN ATTENDANCE	WHO PLANS EACH OF THE LISTED GATHERINGS
Adult Groups or Classes (in person or online)	38	Lead Pastor and lay people
Baptisms (number last year)	6	Lead Pastor
Children's Groups or Classes	14	Paid Coordinator
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	138	Lead Pastor
Church-wide Meals	88	Fellowship Team
Choirs and Music Groups	18	Music Director
Communion (served how often?)	100	Lead Pastor (monthly)
Confirmation (number confirmed last year)	6	Lead Pastor and lay people
Drama or Dance Program	24	Lay led
Funerals (number last year)	3	Lead Pastor
Intergenerational Groups	32	Paid Coordinator
Prayer or Meditation Groups	22	Lay lead
Weddings (number last year)	2	Lead Pastor
Worship (digital / online / livestream)	44	Volunteer Media Team
Youth Groups or Classes	6	Paid Coordinator

Worship Times

WORSHIP (TIME SLOT):	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN ATTENDANCE	WHO PLANS EACH OF THE LISTED GATHERINGS
10:30	100	Lead Pastor

Additional comments:

No response

List of all members or regular participants in our congregation who are ordained or commissioned ministers, or who hold Lay Ministerial Standing. Additionally the names of Members in Discernment in our congregation.

NAME	THREE-WAY OR FOUR-WAY COVENANT	MINISTRY SETTING	TYPE OF MINISTRY ROLE	RETIRED
Karen Aitkens	none	Southwood UCC	member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Don Becker	none	Southwood UCC	member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
John Chaplin	3	Zion UCC, Mayview	part-time pastor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staci Cooper	none	Southwood UCC	Intern and MID	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jane Fisler-Hoffman	none	Southwood UCC	member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Denise Hill	none	Southwood UCC	member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Janice Hill	none	Southwood UCC	member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dale Parson	none	Southwood UCC	member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Bruce Pilcher	none	Southwood UCC	member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Virginia Pych	none	Southwood UCC	member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Bethany Ruhl	none	Southwood UCC	therapist	<input type="checkbox"/>
Michael Stephens	3	Southwood UCC	Lead Pastor	<input type="checkbox"/>

Previous pastors or retired ministers who currently hold membership in the church and their role(s) in the life of the congregation:

We have many retired pastors at Southwood. This says something about the kind of special community we have here that so many pastors want to be members. Many of these pastors fill in and preach when the pastor is away. They are also available to help with pastoral care when needed. We met with this group of pastors as we discussed hiring a new full-time associate pastor. They were excited about exploring new models for ministry and said they would help in any way they could.

List of all current staff:

STAFF POSITION	HEAD OF STAFF	COMPENSATION	SUPERVISED BY	LENGTH OF TENURE FOR CURRENT PERSON IN THIS POSITION
Lead Pastor	Head of Staff	full	Council	22 years
Church Administrator	Lead Pastor	part	Lead Pastor	7 years
Music Director	Lead Pastor	part	Lead Pastor	2 years
Classical Guitarist	Lead Pastor	part	Music Director	21 years
Pianist	Lead Pastor	part	Music Director	3 years
Custodian	Lead Pastor	part	Buildings & Grounds Team	5 years
Nursery Attendant	Lead Pastor	part	Christian Education Team	3 years

Reflection: What this information reflect about our congregation's overall ministry:

We have people of all age groups but are leaning older. We need to continue to attract young families. While we live in an area with a growing African-American population, our black members are mostly here because of our ONA identity. This is possibly an area for growth as a unique progressive option. Southwood is an active congregation with many ways to engage, grow and become involved. We look forward to a new minister joining us who can bring her or his own passions and areas of interest. We are always ready to explore new ways of being church together.

Church Finances

Current Annual Income

SOURCE	AMOUNT
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	210000
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	20000
Rentals of Church Building	500
Memorial Fund	6000
Total	236500

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

237150

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

[Download church budget](#)

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

57

Has the church ever failed to pay its financial obligations to a minister of the church?

No

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

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

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered?

We include OCWM in our budget. For the past 22 years, we have raised our OCWM giving by \$500 per year. Our church is the biggest supporter of OCWM per capita in our conference.

If calculated as a percentage of operating budget, this is the percentage?

7

Total amount of loan debt:

No response

Reason for debt:

No response

Are capital and other payments current?

No

Capital Campaigns

Description of any building programs projected or underway.

No response

Pictures



Description of any capital campaigns in the last ten years:

YEAR(S)	PURPOSE	GOAL	RESULT	IMPACT
0		0	0	
0		0	0	

Description of any capital campaigns underway or anticipated:

YEAR(S)	PURPOSE	GOAL	RESULT	IMPACT
0		0	0	
0		0	0	

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

Twelve years ago we did some construction to expand our main bathrooms, add a garage for our mower and tools and open up our main hallway to alleviate congestion. The total cost was about \$82,000. We raised all of the money and did not need to take out a loan.

Does your church have an endowment?

No

Other Assets

No response

Reserves (savings):

23000

Investments (other than endowment):

144880

Does the church have a parsonage?

No

Description of all buildings owned by the church:

Our church building was built in two phases. In 1961, we began construction on the fellowship hall, kitchen, offices, classrooms and bathrooms. In 1971, we began construction on the sanctuary and narthex over a basement with several Sunday School classrooms. The building is fully paid for and is maintained in good shape. We do not have enough parking, and many cars have to be parked on the side street. All of the meeting areas on the main floor are used as best as possible. We could really use a couple more classrooms on the main floor and better storage, but we are able to make it work.

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

We no longer have other buildings, but we were gifted a home many years ago that we used to help refugees settle in our area. That home ended up having several problems, so we sold it for \$87,000 during the pandemic. That is one of the reasons our investments are large. We are undecided if we want to buy another home near the church for that purpose or use the money in another way.

Accessibility features of our building(s):

Exterior access such as ramps for wheelchair users or people requiring other mobility assistance
Accessible parking spaces
Access to worship spaces, including chancel and pulpit, for wheelchair users and people with other mobility aids
Access to child care spaces for wheelchair users and people with other mobility aids
Listening devices in the sanctuary, or wireless technology to connect to hearing aids

Wheelchair access in bathrooms
Handrails on all stairs
Sound system in sanctuary and other meeting places (fellowship hall, large meeting rooms, etc.)
Curb cuts
Wheelchair areas in sanctuary (other than "front or back")

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs:

We have power doors to enter the sanctuary and fellowship hall (recently installed). There are a few pews in the sanctuary that are shorter to make room for wheel chairs. When we redesigned the sanctuary 19 years ago, we added a ramp up to the chancel for better access. We also extended the wheel chair ramp outside so that it would be ADA compliant. The extension of the bathrooms twelve years ago included two wheel chair accessible spaces. We have hearing assistance headphones available in the sanctuary. The projection we use is large enough for everyone to read.

Policies regarding financial practices of the church:

We have separate roles for the Fin. Sec. and Treas. The Financial Secretary counts the money (checks received and online giving) with a second person, records all donations, deposits the money and reports that deposit to the Treasurer. The Treasurer pays all bills and employees as directed by the Council. All checks require a second signature. The churches finances are audited every year by two member volunteers. The Council sets the budget which is approved at the annual congregational meeting. Any non-budgeted expenses over \$5000 need to be approved at a special congregational meeting.

Reflection: After reviewing the church's finances and assets described above, what this information reflects about our congregation's mission and ministry:

We are financially stable and good stewards of the gifts entrusted to us. We are willing to spend money to make our spaces more accessible to all. Mission giving in money, gifts and time is central to who we are.

Historical Information**Significant happenings in the history of our church that have shaped the identity of our congregation.**

In the 1980s, we broke new ground by calling Jane Fisler Hoffman as pastor, the first woman minister in Raytown, Missouri. Her progressive values and education initiatives expanded our inclusivity, including changing our Communion policy to welcome all. In the 1990s, openly Lesbian seminary student Briget Nicholson served as an interim minister, prompting us to become an Open & Affirming congregation in 2002. This commitment to inclusivity was further deepened under the leadership of Rev. Michael Stephens and his wife Catherine, when he became our pastor the same year. His teachings of progressive theology helped us grow and embrace new values. A significant milestone in the past decade was our designation as a Creation Justice Church, highlighting our dedication to environmental stewardship. These pivotal moments have profoundly shaped our identity and mission as a congregation dedicated to love, justice, and inclusivity.

A specific change our church has managed in the recent past.

For many years, some members have encouraged conservation and recycling at Southwood. In the last year, the church formed a Green Justice Team to study the process of becoming a Creation Justice Church. The requirements were met, and we are officially a Creation Justice Church. On a daily basis, that has meant that each ministry team opens its meeting with a Green Justice Moment. We are doing a lot more dishwashing, as we have decided that all church activities will no longer use disposable plates, cups, utensils and glasses.

We have hosted a well-attended event in which a speaker educated the audience about recycling in our community. There have also been several church-wide Earth-friendly activities.

Every church has conflict, some minor, some larger. "Where two or three are gathered, there will be disagreement....". These are our congregation's values and practices when it comes to conflict.

Our congregation has learned to be open to discussing differences of opinion. We are willing to listen to the opinions and ideas of others and to value them as part of the thinking of our community. Disagreements do not fester in quiet conversations but are openly discussed to either come to an agreement or simply to honor our differences. Individuals recognize that in a community relationship, everything is not always going to go their way.

The most recent major conflict through which our church has navigated.

Southwood has experienced relatively few major conflicts in the last twenty years, but several years ago we decided to explore the social justice issues around the death penalty. We read books and invited guest speakers. In the end, many people in the church wanted to take a vote declaring that our church stands against the death penalty. But there were others who were not firmly against the death penalty in all cases. Forcing a vote on the issue was going to be contentious. The Council decided that it is more important to discuss difficult issues openly and that it is not always necessary to end with a vote with winners and losers.

Ministerial History:

Name: Michael Stephens	Years of service: 22	UCC Standing
Name: Buck Firth	Years of service: 1	UCC Standing
Name: Louis Schweppe	Years of service: 4	UCC Standing
Name: Jane Fisler-Hoffman	Years of service: 7	UCC Standing
Name: William Lane	Years of service: 13	UCC Standing
Name: Melvin Lichte	Years of service: 6	UCC Standing
Name: Glenn Nowack	Years of service: 7	UCC Standing

What our church has learned about itself and its relationship with people who provided ministerial leadership.

We who make up Southwood are truly a family. Our pastor is a member of that family who walks alongside us as we seek to discern together how to live our lives in a Christ-like way. We regard our leadership as sisters or brothers whose particular gift to family members is to raise questions, sometimes make us a bit uncomfortable and guide discussion and growth in our spirituality.

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

No

Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?

No

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

No

Has a previous minister been a contributor to conflict following their tenure as pastor?

No

Community Vision

How the relationships and activities of our congregation extend outward in service and advocacy.

Southwood is known for its commitment in the community. We do several service projects for and with a Migrant Farmworkers' Association just east of Kansas City. We do projects at Blue Springs Terrace which is a collection of homes for retired UCC and DOC pastors. We have begun a relationship

with HALO, a new home for homeless teens just four miles from the church. We collect food and do other projects with REAP (Raytown Emergency Assistance Program) for people in need in our area. We regularly take mission trips to Antigua, Guatemala where we work with indigenous people installing wood burning stoves, water lines and school kitchens. We have worked with SAVE, Inc in Kansas City which has a program dedicated to homeless LGBTQ adults and youth. Every four years we register people to vote. Many of us have worked on social justice issues related to race, sexual orientation, fair housing, migrant families, the death penalty and environmental care.

Our congregation's participation in meetings, relationships and activities connecting the wider United Church of Christ.

Southwood is very proudly part of the United Church of Christ. We are part of the Western Association of the Missouri Mid-South Conference. We have delegates that attend association and conference meetings. Our pastor is presently the chair of the Western Association Committee on Ministry. We have Synod groupies that like to attend General Synod together whenever they can. We are excited to be hosting General Synod in KC next July. We are very committed to OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission). Our offering to the wider UCC has gone up \$500 every year for the past 22 years and now sits at \$17,000 per year. That makes us the largest per-capita giving congregation in our conference. We also proudly display United Church of Christ brochures and banners at the church. Our church was founded in 1958, one year after the UCC was founded - so we were one of the first UCC churches not changing our name from one of the other five streams. Being UCC is at the core of who we are.

How our church engages with the community organizing movements in our community.

In 2024, MORE2 is a group that organized a march every month building up to the election as a push back against White Christian Nationalism. Many of us attended those marches, and our Pastor was one of the organizers for the biggest march. We have participated with several organizations working to deal with climate change and attended a protest led by some of our youth in the Sunrise Movement. Our pastor serves as the protestant representative on the Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council, a body of many different religions that live and work in the Kansas City area. This has led to our participation in MLK celebrations, Thanksgiving services, New Year's prayers and many other activities trying to make Kansas City "the most welcoming community for all."

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, through [Just World Covenants](#) or affiliations with other groups. Check any of the following partnerships which your congregation has formally adopted, or movements which otherwise apply to your congregation.

Creation Justice.

Open and Affirming (ONA).

What the above statement(s) mean(s) to our community. How our congregation plans to work toward the above statements of witness in the future.

We are open to pursuing any of these designations. We just need someone passionate about taking the lead. Our main goal in becoming ONA and a Creation Justice church was that these not just be badges attached to our name but truly lived out in who we are as a church. If our new associate minister has a passion around one of these areas, we would enthusiastically support the process of learning new things and adding to our identity as a radically inclusive church.

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

As described before, we are part of the Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council. This round-table consists of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Sufis, Native Americans, Catholics, Protestants, Sikhs, Pagans and more. Our pastor is the Protestant Christian representative on the Council. If our new Associate Pastor has interests in this area, she or he would be welcomed into that position which provides many opportunities for the entire church throughout the year.

How our mission statement compares to the actual time spent engaging in different activities.

We do not have a specific mission statement. Our constitution lifts up Micah's words: "do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God." Our G.I.F.T.S. motto has been central to our identity = Give to those in need, Invest in the wider church, Fellowship in Community, Teach a progressive theology and Seek social justice and peace. These are balanced and reflected in our use of resources and time. Our pastor also created a word that is used at times to greet one another: "LIWATU" involves the call to be aLive, aWake and atTuned as individuals and as a church.

The scope of work assigned to our pastor(s). How their community ministry and their ministry in and on behalf of the wider church accounted for in the congregation's expectations on their time.

Our pastor is expected to pursue areas of interest outside the church especially in terms of ecumenical work and engagement with the wider UCC. Presently, our pastor is the Chair of the Committee on Ministry for the Western Association. He regularly attends Association and Conference meetings and retreats and has been to almost every General Synod. He also serves as the Protestant Christian representative on the Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council.

The ARDA or MissionInsite Reflection

ARDA/MI File

[Download ARDA/MI File](#)

From looking at our congregation's The ARDA or MissionInsite report, these trends and opportunities are what stood out to us.

With 34% of people renting and that number growing, we may want to focus more on our work with KC Tenants which fights for the rights of those who rent. The last time we checked, they were not yet organizing in the Raytown area. As stated elsewhere, the growing African-American

population may provide an opportunity if any would be interested in a very progressive theology and social stances.

How our congregation's internal demographics compare or contrast to a) the neighborhoods adjacent to our church, and b) other neighborhoods with which our church connects.

While we have several young families and young adults, we still tend to be older while the community around us has all ages. There are certainly more black families in the area than are reflected in our pews.

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

Southwood is unique since we were the first Open and Affirming church outside of Kansas City's core. Almost everyone that has joined our church was either LGBTQ or a huge ally. Our progressive theology is front and center, and this has allowed us to draw from a much wider range of people than just the Raytown area. We will continue to lead with our progressive theology and social stances.

What we hear when we talk to community leaders and ask them what our church is known for.

Southwood is known as "that church." Whenever one of us talks to someone about where we go to church, at some point ONA or the rainbow flag are mentioned, and the persons responds by saying, "Ah, you go to THAT church." So we've proudly claimed that title and made it our website (thatchurch.us). We are known for being involved in the local food pantry and another ministry where lunches are handed out to children during the summer. We are also known for our annual homemade ice cream social and our rummage sale that raises money for missions. But we are mostly known for our rainbow flag.

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

The top four reasons Southwood members say they got involved are our Open and Affirming stance, our progressive theology, our work for social justice and our genuine hospitality.

References



☒ Lois Werner

Completed: Wednesday, Dec 11, 2024

I am the co-founder of People for Guatemala. Southwood UCC is one of our mission partners. We host members of SUCC each year in Guatemala.

Personal: 9412448692

Reference Response

I have not had the opportunity to attend a service in person at Southwood, however, I do know Pastor Michael Stephens, his wife Catherine, and their son and daughter. They all have visited us in Guatemala to do various volunteer projects here. Pastor Stephens has organized mission trips and several members of the congregation have spent a week each year with us to support our projects and offer their volunteer services to install stoves or work on construction projects. There are some members of the church who contribute to People for Guatemala to support our programs in Guatemala. We are grateful for our partnership.



☒ Jesse Tanner

Completed: 3 days ago

Former Student Pastor at Southwood UCC

Church Primary Phone: 847-741-4044

Reference Response

To Whom It May Concern,

Southwood United Church of Christ has been a beacon of hope, faith, and community in Jackson County, MO for many years. As their congregation grows in its mission of radical hospitality, spiritual nourishment, and outreach to our diverse community, the addition of an Associate Pastor is a vital next step in expanding ministry and deepening their impact. Southwood UCC has a strong foundation of faith and leadership, but with the increasing demands on the current solo Pastor and the growing opportunities to serve, this position will help ensure sustainability, growth, and a balanced workload. Southwood will be able to better live into the commitment to nurture all generations, address evolving spiritual needs, and carry out Christ's call to love and justice.

In Christ,
Jesse Tanner

☒ Josh Morris

Completed: 4 days ago

As ordained UCC clergy, I not only called Southwood UCC my church home, but also held a four-way covenant with the church.

Mobile Phone: 8165855112

Reference Response

Southwood is a breath of fresh air in a community that needs it. Southwood was the church in the community that was unabashedly open and affirming. The reputation of the church, being designated as *that church* ended becoming a badge of honor: Yes, Southwood is that church: a church that is truly welcoming of all. Pastor Michael and church leadership have intentionally co-created a community that meets people wherever they are. I actually mean this. Often this is brochure lingo, but Southwood succeeds. Another element of Southwood that is truly beautiful and hard to find currently is a church that does inter-generational community well. Southwood has cultivated intentional community time after church and throughout the seasons of the liturgical year, all point to a church that is transparent and safe for the entire family.

Closing Prayer

Creator God, Creating Still, we hold this entire process and journey in prayer. We pray for all of those who are seeking a church community in which to minister. In particular, we pray for the one person whose heart and mind you are preparing especially for us. May your Spirit nudge them to this place where their passions, our hopes and your dreams will meet. And give us the necessary amounts of wisdom and patience as this process unfolds. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Statement of Consent

1. Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile?

For example, church council or consistory, transition team, etc.

The Search Team and Pastor Michael were tasked with putting this profile together by the Church Council. We had a visioning process that involved the entire congregation which led to the conclusion that we are ready to call a full-time associate pastor. And the budget for that position was put together by the Church Council and approved at our annual congregational meeting in November of 2024.

2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

No response