

# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

First United Church of Oak Park  
Oak Park, Illinois

Lead Pastor

Illinois Conference,  
Chicago Metropolitan Association

January 12, 2025

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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)*

## INSTRUCTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# 1. POSITION POSTING

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

## 1a. LISTING INFORMATION

Church name: First United Church of Oak Park

Street address: 848 Lake Street

Supplemental web links: <http://www.firstunitedoakpark.com/>

Pastor search website link: <https://first-united-church-of-op-2025.squarespace.com>

Additional ecumenical affiliations (*e.g. denominations, communions, fellowships*):  
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Conference: Illinois Conference

Association: Chicago Metropolitan Association

UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person (Name, Title, Phone, Email):

Name: The Rev. Shernell J. Edney Stilley

Title: Associate Conference Minister for Pastoral Transitions

Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ

Phone: 708.344.4470

Email: [shernelledneystilley@ilucc.org](mailto:shernelledneystilley@ilucc.org)

Summary Ministry Description:

*In a short paragraph, reflect on where your church is going and what it might look like when you get there. What do you need to get there? Who are you seeking to join you on this part of your church's faith journey?*

As we seek to become an even greater light in the world around us, we are excited to welcome a new pastor to join us in writing the next chapter of our ministry, serving as the hands and feet of Christ in our community. We are a progressive, inclusive congregation—a union of PCUSA and UCC with members representing many faith backgrounds—**poised for spiritual growth and bold transformation**. Our beloved, historic building serves as both a sanctuary and hub for our active community leadership and many mission partners. We seek a dynamic and skilled leader (and engaged staff manager) to work with lay leadership to envision our future and guide us in reaching out to new generations and those in our community seeking renewed faith. We also look for a pastor who proclaims Christ's radically inclusive love with intellect and passion.

Photographs:

*Insert 1 – 3 images of your church, its people, its parsonage or building or gathering space, etc.*



Easter Sunday.



Youth participating in Worship.



Peace pole dedication.

Additional photographs are available at [firstunitedoakpark.com](http://firstunitedoakpark.com) and <https://first-united-church-of-op-2025.squarespace.com>.

*What we value about living in our area (2 – 3 sentences):*

Oak Park is a progressive, racially and economically diverse urban village of 50,000 people living in 4.5 square miles, adjacent to the western boundary of the many-sided city of Chicago. Oak Park's civic pride is built around high ideals of inclusion, participation, and justice. First United Church strongly subscribes to those ideals. Small-town character is balanced by the presence of three rapid transit lines, an interstate highway, and ready access to both major Chicago airports. Excellent public and parochial schools, an outstanding public library, two nearby private universities, and a large community college are major resources for Oak Park and surrounding communities.

Here is additional information about Oak Park:

[Village of Oak Park](#)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oak\\_Park,\\_Illinois](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oak_Park,_Illinois)

<https://explore.visitoakpark.com/architecture-history>

[https://oprhc.org/regional\\_housing\\_center\\_history/](https://oprhc.org/regional_housing_center_history/)

[Oak Park Elementary School District 97 | Oak Park School District 97](#)

[Home - Oak Park and River Forest High School](#)

Current size of membership: ~400

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

Position Title: Lead Pastor

Position Duration: Settled

Compensation Level: Full Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines? Yes

## **1b. SCOPE OF WORK**

*(add here the Scope of Work developed by your church using the Call Agreement Workbook)*

The Lead Pastor is responsible for, in order of importance:

### 1. Spiritual Guidance and Pastoral Care

- A. Provide pastoral leadership for creating and maintaining a framework that inspires, nourishes, and informs the spiritual welfare of the congregation.
- B. Be responsible for the worship experience at First United. The Lead Pastor will provide overall worship planning leadership and will preach approximately 35 times per year. Additionally, the Lead Pastor will be expected to participate in worship when he/she is not preaching, ensure that the sacraments are administered appropriately, and officiate at weddings and funerals as necessary.
- C. With the staff and lay members of the church, help to educate and provide pastoral care for the congregation and for all who seek comfort and guidance through the church; foster a culture of care.
- D. Be an active participant in the leadership of the adult education program.
- E. Speak with both wisdom and authenticity, offering sermons that inspire reflection and action while fostering a sense of belonging for everyone. Is attuned to the social issues and challenges people face, skillfully weaving faith with a call to justice, compassion, and inclusion. Focus on love, kindness, and understanding, and encourage congregants to engage thoughtfully with the world around them.

### 2. Leadership and Development

- A. Empower individuals to live out their faith through transformative action, nurturing both personal and communal development.
- B. Be the head of staff supervising and encouraging a collegial, collaborative approach with the pastoral, program, and administrative staff; participate in annual and ongoing performance evaluations based on Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual
- C. Mentor and promote the personal, spiritual and leadership growth of pastoral and lay leaders.
- D. Provide staff support and spiritual guidance to the following committees: Personnel, Finance, Stewardship, and other committees as assigned by Council.
- E. Promote healthy behaviors in the congregation, Council, and staff, and identify and address unhealthy behaviors when observed.
- F. In collaboration with the Council Moderator, provide leadership to the Church Council
- G. Promote and interpret the church's mission.
- H. Engage in professional development opportunities.
- I. Maintain current standing in the UCC Chicago Metropolitan Association and the Presbytery of Chicago.

### 3. Community Engagement and Partnerships

- A. Serve as a community representative of the church, supporting partnerships and relationships with community groups and other churches.
- B. Actively represent the church in the community in social justice initiatives and envision new ways of being the hands of Christ in the community.
- C. Oversee the church's relationship with internal partners, such as the First United

Nursery School, Beyond Hunger (Food Pantry), and other Mission Partners

- D. Regularly engage in congregation-wide fellowship activities
- E. Ensure a high level of community connection and representation with organizations like the Community of Congregations as well as develop and maintain strong relationships with other clergy within the community First United serves.

#### 4. Resource Development and Fiscal Management

- A. Lead the congregation in being a welcoming community, growing its participation/membership and finances consistent with the programs and theological mission of the church.
- B. Responsibly manage the church's financial resources in cooperation with Council, the Finance Committee, and financial staff
- C. Take a leadership role in efforts to achieve long-term financial goals of the church.

Core Competencies: Passionate and Nurturing Spiritual Leader, Imaginative Visionary, Organized and Empowering Administrator

*(List three core competencies that you imagine could be foundational in your next minister's relationship with the church. For example, a church seeking a pastoral care minister might hope to call someone who is caring, sensitive and sociable, while a church seeking an executive minister might want an organized, detail-oriented and time conscious person.)*

## **1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT**

*Salary Basis (from the Call Agreement Workbook, equal to Cash Salary plus Value of Parsonage/Housing Allowance):* Meets Conference Guidelines, (includes salary, FICA Allowance, Housing Allowance), Pension/LIDI, Medical, Dental, Continuing Education)

*Salary Basis:* a minimum of \$99,500 (includes 2025 COLA and the FICA Allowance and a Housing Allowance).

*Denomination Required Benefits:* Pension/LIDI, Medical/Dental/Vision Insurance plus Continuing Education and Professional Expenses.

**What is the expected living situation for your next minister** (e.g. parsonage, living nearby with a housing allowance, living elsewhere to commute as needed)? Housing allowance

*Comment on the residential/commuting expectations for your next minister.*

First United Church expects its Lead Pastor to be physically present in the church building several days per week; to participate in evening and weekend meetings and social activities; to visit members in their homes and hospitals; and to engage with community groups, other local clergy, and regional church bodies. In order to meet these expectations, residence within reasonable Chicago-area commuting distance is required.

*State any incentives (e.g. school debt reduction or retention bonus after a certain number of years in position):* Study Leave and Sabbatical Leave with approval from the Personnel Team or Council, respectively.

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

In the Illinois Conference of the UCC, Clergy Communities of Practice is the formal peer support mechanism. Associate Conference Ministers provide pastoral support to clergy as needed. All Authorized Ministers are required to participate in regular Healthy Clergy Ethics/Boundary training. There are also various informal support networks, available in person and online. In the Presbytery of Chicago, there is a new pastor consort, a support group designed to help with initial adjustment, along with required Boundary Training. The Presbytery's regional liaison representative will contact the Lead Pastor regularly to serve as a sounding board and support.

*If applicable, describe how your church will adopt part-time adjustments in the pastoral schedule to support a minister's bi-vocational employment:* N/A



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

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

The Lead Pastor of First United Church will play a key role in guiding the church through a period of reimagination and transformation. In close collaboration with the Church Council and strong lay leaders, the Lead Pastor will help shape, clarify, and implement specific goals and plans aimed at fostering congregational engagement and growth.

Our FY2025 Ministry Outline highlights our church's current initiatives. Below are the key initiatives that our next minister will help advance.

- 1) Develop a Church-Wide Culture of Growth to Share God's Radically Inclusive Love
  - Learn and implement new outreach and growth practices to become an invitational church.
  - Implement the church's branding plan to reach out to the community with a clearer identity.
  - Strengthen the Church's relationships with First United Nursery School students and their families.
  
- 2) Cultivate Ways of Working Together to Support the Church's Historical Ministries
  - Strengthen and support opportunities for vibrant, engaging, and faithful worship (in-person and live-streamed)
  - Increase the existing community of care within the congregation, focusing on expanding the role of Deacons' Care Groups
  - Reinforce First United Church's role as community faith leader and partner of choice for neighbors and others addressing issues of justice, housing, children, and hunger.
  - Reimagine children, youth, and young adult ministries.
  - Nurture intergenerational relationships.

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

The Lead Pastor is expected to embrace and extend First United Church's longstanding commitment to spiritual, moral, and programmatic leadership in the broader community. The church provides space, money, and volunteers to many mission partners to address, among other things, homelessness, hunger, education and safety of children and youth, and many justice issues. The church houses Beyond Hunger (food pantry), Kids Kloset (clothing provider), Learning Edge (tutoring), Scouting America, and community-admired (and NAEYC-accredited) First United

Church Nursery School. The Lead Pastor will help connect people with opportunities to support existing programs and explore new opportunities to combat poverty and injustice in the local community and the world.

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

First United has few, if any, non-English-speaking members. No special language skills are required. However, the church needs a Lead Pastor who is culturally aware and willing to engage in tough conversations around issues such as race and nationality.

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

First United Church believes that four marks are particularly important:

- Exhibiting A Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice
- Building Transformational Leadership Skills
- Working Together for Justice and Mercy
- Strengthening Inter- and Intra- Personal Assets

## 2. WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME?

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

*Who is God calling you to become as a congregation?*

God is calling us to serve as the hands and feet of Christ, growing our own spirituality and connectedness, and reaching more individuals in our community as a welcoming faith environment to continue their faith journey.

- First United is charged to serve its own members. Spiritually enriching worship and deeply felt pastoral care are particularly strong areas of concern. The church seeks a balance among service to the community, vocal challenge to the evils of the world, fulfilling worship, and caring, supportive ministry.
- First United remains committed to its historic concerns with racial, social, and economic justice, especially through its relationship with an array of mission partners who keep the building and the members busy throughout the week.
- Guided, as always, by love for all God’s people, the church strengthens its partnerships with not only the many service-providing organizations it houses, but other needs of our neighbors as well. Along with community partners, First United members purchase home goods to support those transitioning from homelessness, support early-childhood literacy by providing books to low-income new mothers and contribute Christmas gifts to families in need.

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

*For example, describe two experiments your congregation has initiated or engaged in the past year, what were the results and where do you see your next steps? Has your church had a multi-year strategic plan or vision statement; if so, where do you see that plan/vision taking you?*

### Specialist in Aging

In May 2024, in collaboration with Concordia University, First United had a 6-week training in a new type of ministry - **Specialist in Aging**. The purpose was to give interested members the tools to celebrate, support and engage the older members of our congregation. The Deacon Board is exploring some of the ideas that came from that workshop - lay visitation team, Sunday service transportation team, and inviting older members to participate in the communion service. The Fellowship Team continued their tradition of celebrating our members aged 90+ years with a birthday party for those local and the Deacons sent out birthday cards to those unable to attend the party. Future plans include developing a lay ministry in providing spiritual and practical support to

those dealing with their spiritual legacy and end-of-life issues. This ministry is envisioned as a lay support for both church members and the pastoral staff.

### In-Between Church

Our Interim Pastor strongly suggested that we read *The In-Between Church* by Alice Mann as a congregation. This past spring members of the Interim Search Committee held seven sessions for the congregation to have conversations about this book, how we saw ourselves as a congregation, and where we would like to go in the future. Just over 100 people attended these sessions. We recognized that we were a Pastoral sized church (50-150 active members) that was acting as if we were a Program sized church (151-400 active members). If we wanted to grow into a true Program sized church we would need to: be invitational, grow outside our comfort zone, and practice congregational care differently. To this end we have expanded the role of Deacons to take on more of the tasks of congregational care. We partnered this with an effort to get in touch with members who we have not seen since the Covid pandemic. About 75 households were contacted by members of the church to check in and see how they are doing and let them know that they are missed. This is an ongoing effort. Finally, the Deacons piloted a new small groups ministry with the intention of building and maintaining connection within our congregation outside of Teams/Committees, Bible Study or Fellowship groups. This ministry started with five groups of up to 10 people who met weekly for six weeks with group created engagement guidelines and moderators to facilitate more meaningful connections. These groups are proving to be very successful. We are planning on starting a new round of small groups in January and developing a training program for facilitators as the goal of this ministry is to expand the number of the small groups so this intimate fellowship can deeply connect all our members.

### Ministry Outline

Our FY2025 Ministry Outline, which is described in Section 1d, highlights our church's current initiatives to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of our community and congregation. Some of the accomplishments from the implementation of the ministry outline include: 1) establishing new branding for our Church, 2) making new efforts to foster and enhance the community of care in our congregation through a small groups initiative, 3) coordinating youth group-led monthly service projects in our larger community and 4) paying off our margin loan and creating a new fund to financially support emergency expenses and a selection of capital improvement needs.

### **3. WHO ARE WE NOW?**

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

- a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS
- b. 11-YEAR REPORT
- c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS
- d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING
- e. CHURCH FINANCES
- f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### **3a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS**

*Describe your congregation's life of faith.*

*For example, what beliefs and commitments are stated in your congregation's purpose statement or membership vows? How is God most often described in worship liturgy? In what ways would you describe the Holy Spirit in your midst?*

Our congregation's life of faith is described in our Purpose Statement, which follows:

We are an open and inclusive Christian Community, members of the worldwide Body of Christ, gathered to do the work of disciples:

- Worshipping God, as we celebrate our faith through scripture, sermon, prayers, song, and sacrament.
- Sharing the Good News of the Gospel, as we join with others to lead the way to a just and peaceful world.
- Nurturing the faith of children, youth, and adults, as we shape Christian character and conduct.
- Caring for each other as a congregation, as we share our hopes and joys, our doubts, and our sorrows.
- Loving our neighbors near and far, as we generously use our hands, voices, and abundant gifts to serve those in need.

We try to use Inclusive God language in our worship services. For example, we begin the Lord's Prayer with “Our Creator, Our Mother, and Our Father...”

*Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.*

*Theological, gender, and family diversity.* The members of First United Church come from a large variety of religious backgrounds, resulting in a rich and varied theology and diversity of viewpoints. Several retired or inactive ordained clergy from many denominations contribute their knowledge and experience. The church's Open and Affirming/More Light stance has fostered a diverse and welcoming membership regarding sexual orientation and gender identification. Same-sex parents, adoptive families, and ethnically mixed families are numerous within the congregation. These diversities add up to a unique approach to Christian faith.

*Strong and resilient lay leadership.* The Church Council and other lay leaders take their responsibilities very seriously. Often driven by strong opinions, this leadership challenges and spurs the congregation to action. This in turn has built a resilient, capable church, able to thrive in times of adversity. The church has high expectations of itself and its leaders.

*Desire for social justice.* This longstanding commitment is reflected in the church's relationships with several mission partners. Support is expressed in many forms: intensive use of the church building; thousands of hours of volunteer time; and contributions of about \$100,000 annually to mission projects - in our church, the community and the world. We have a long history of lay leadership in our social justice initiatives through a dedicated Faith In Action Team.

*Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.*

*For example, where does worship take place, and what is it based around? What was a recent baptism like? What are some words used to describe good preaching?*

Worship:

The church has an active education program for children and adults beginning around 9:30 am. During this time, you will also find both youth group members and adults in the lounge area socializing, fundraising for various events, and advertising/informing about opportunities to volunteer and/or donate to certain organized causes. These have included Christmas cookie sales by the youth to raise money for summer work camp, an alternative Christmas store with the proceeds going to help worldwide and local groups of people, signing up to help donate items for Housing Forward to help people move into their first apartments/homes, signing petitions and cards and many other things.

Spirit-filled Sunday morning services are held in the 100-year-old sanctuary, enlivened by dramatic overhead art installations. Built on the traditional framework of preaching, music, and prayer, worship invites active, varied participation. Joyous, uplifting choir and organ music and congregational singing often include African American spirituals and Spanish-language hymns as well as traditional hymns from both The New Century Hymnal and The Presbyterian Hymnal. The Passing of the Peace encourages handshakes, hugs, smiles, and warm greetings. Lay readers, including children and youth, frequently present the scriptures. Congregants often make announcements or invite support for activities. Sermons that inform, inspire, and guide are of central importance. In a tradition started in 2023, we end our worship by forming a circle around the sanctuary perimeter, reminding us that we are not alone in facing the challenges that await us as we leave.

Children, present and welcome throughout the entire service, are important participants. They serve as acolytes, baptism assistants, and occasional musical performers. A weekly Time for Sharing, a short, interactive children's sermon, welcomes young ones to the front of the sanctuary. Other resources for children and parents include children's worship bags, which include coloring pages and activities related to the sermon for the day, rocking chairs, and a fully staffed nursery.

Baptisms of infants, children, youth, and adults enrich Sunday services throughout the year as the church embraces fellow worshippers and servants of God. Several times per year, new members, including our confirmands, receive a joyous welcome.

In addition to all the traditional services on the annual worship calendar, we pour extra energy and creativity into these gatherings:

- **Ash Wednesday** is a particularly moving service with multiple opportunities for congregation engagement. The imposition of ashes includes the choice of glitter ashes recognizing we are all made of stardust.
- **Blue Christmas**, a reflective worship service that takes place near the winter solstice, to honor those who are grieving or experiencing difficult times.
- **Sticky Church** is the first Sunday after Christmas where we enjoy carols, community, and French toast casseroles drowned in syrup.
- **Outdoor worship** in summer months on the generous front lawn of our church property.
- The outdoor **Blessing of the Animals** in August has also included the blessing of teachers and backpacks as a new school year begins.

### Choirs and Music Groups:

Music plays an extremely important role in our church. We have many amateur and professional musicians in the congregation who participate in the church's worship services.

Worship music is enriched by the church's 1983 Casavant pipe organ and 9-foot Steinway grand piano. These instruments are also used in concerts open to the public. The organist, a professional church musician with degrees from North Park University in Chicago and the Juilliard School of Music in New York, has been with First United Church since 2023.

The choir, with a membership of 15 to 25 adult members, sings nearly every Sunday from early September to early June. Guest singers and orchestral musicians join the choir for some services. Handbells are sometimes used in church services by both adults and children.

The Music Director position has been reorganized and we are currently searching for a quarter-time Choir Director.

Children's music is led by our associate pastor. Children in the preschool through 5<sup>th</sup> grade Church School classes sing and perform in church at least four times a year.

Over the past year, church members have put together a volunteer group of approximately 15 folk/pop musicians who perform at various church services. This has brought a fresh and engaging element to our services.

The church also has a Woodwind Quintet, made up of volunteers who are mostly church members, which generally performs a couple of times a year.

### Preaching:

The intellectual and passionate preaching style preferred by members educates us on how to apply scripture and Christ's teachings in modern life and challenges us to live Christ's all-inclusive love.

*Describe the educational program/faith formation vision of your church. For example, how are young people in leadership? How do people continue to form their faith over a lifetime? Name a topic studied or curriculum used recently; what was the impact of this study on those who attended?*

Leadership:

Our commitment to the importance of youth in our church leadership and program formation, two high-school age youth always serve on our Council and a leader of our High School programs serves on our Pastoral Nominating Committee. A youth representative(s) will participate in interviews with final pastoral candidates.

Faith Formation:

First United Church's education effort nurtures lifelong spiritual formation.

Church school attracts children of all ages and abilities, guiding their faith development, welcoming their questions and doubts, imparting Bible stories, and encouraging their love and support for all God's people. For the youngest children, ages 0-3, the church provides a nursery. Children in pre-school through eighth grade attend 9:30 a.m. church school classes held throughout the school year. Each class is taught by two adults and at least one confirmed high school student.

The church school uses several integrated progressive curricula, including Sparkhouse, Godly Play, Deep Blue Kids, and Illustrated Ministry materials. These are supplemented by additional resources and activities. Over the course of the church school year, the children write cards to homebound church members, bake bread for communion, do craft projects, go on nature walks, and create banners for the sanctuary. For one month of the year, each class serves in worship as acolytes and baptism assistants. Children also serve people in need, packing lunches for the local homeless shelter.

Education and spiritual formation continue beyond church school. Ninth graders are encouraged to join Quest, the confirmation class, meeting from September through May. The students explore and deepen their faith through weekly discussions, community service, leadership of the Maundy Thursday service, and visits to worship services of fellow Christians and other religious traditions. At the completion of Quest, the students are invited to seek confirmation and become adult members of the church. Annually, 4 to 8 ninth graders have affirmed their faith and joined the church.

Two youth groups, supported by adult and youth advisors, meet on Sunday evenings sharing meals together and engaging in fun, fellowship, and learning. There are also monthly Justice and Service meetings where the youth have an opportunity to learn how local organizations provide services and work for justice, ex. BUILD, or provide direct service themselves, ex. Feed My Starving Children. Many of the youth advisors also participated in these groups when they were growing up. First United Junior High (FUJI) and First United Senior High (FUSH) reach beyond the church, attracting some participants whose families are not church members.

In the spring, the FUJI youth plan to participate in an OWL (Our Whole Lives) lock-in. OWL is a sexuality education program that encourages healthy sexual attitudes and behavior based on accurate information. The OWL program was discontinued during the pandemic. We are looking for new leadership to restart the program.



This year First United is offering our high school youth a unique summer service experience - Other + Wise: Borderland Journey to learn about justice in immigration. This trip is scheduled for July 19-25. Our Quest program has 9 youth taking classes toward confirmation with each having their own adult Friend in Faith. Our Associate Pastor for Education works with high school seniors to create a Youth Sunday worship service every May.

The young people involved in FUSH and FUJI often testify to the importance of these groups in their lives. Spiritual grounding, safe space for self-expression, and deep and lasting friendships are especially treasured.

Adult education aims to equip First United members for life as disciples of Jesus. Weekly Bible studies, several self-sustaining small groups, and Sunday morning sessions contribute to this effort.

Over the past year, the adult education team built a season of diverse offerings that drew enthusiastic feedback and healthy attendance. Recent topics have focussed on the stress leading up to the election, Religion in Democracy, talking with people we disagree with, and Religion and Science. The most impactful based on the numbers of attendees and responses were:

- **Climate Change.** A five-week series, developed in collaboration with Faith In Action's Green Team, featured presentations by seven experts who promote hope in the face of devastating reality: sustainability and environmental restoration, community-based activism, trash science, and public health/environmental journalism. Between 26 and 33 people attended each of these five sessions, many of whom signed up for more information about and to potentially volunteer for the Climate Reality Project in Chicago.
- **Palestine.** A four-week series about Israel and the Gaza War provided a respectful setting for encountering diverse perspectives on a controversial topic. There were approximately 35 people at each of the 4 sessions, seeking understanding from both sides.

*Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.*

*For example, how are decisions communicated in your church? How are teams or committees organized? Where does your church struggle for vision?*

Pastoral staff includes the Lead Pastor as Head of Staff, and the Associate Pastor. The Choir Director and the Organist are part-time employees. Office staff includes the Church Administrator, Financial Administrator, Manager of Building and Grounds, and 2 custodians. The Director of the First United Nursery School and other nursery school staff are also church employees.

As a joined church of both the United Church of Christ and Presbyterian USA, we follow the UCC's governance model of a Church led by an elected lay Moderator. Thirteen to seventeen elected voting members, including two high school students, serve on the Council, along with pastoral staff as non-voting members.

Deacons, also elected by the congregation, nurture a culture of care for members through prayer and other forms of personal ministry.

Thirteen teams currently carry on the work of the church: Adult Education, Building and Grounds, Children's Ministry, Communications, Faith In Action, Finance, Newcomers, Nominating, Personnel,

Stewardship, Technology, Worship Music and Arts, and Youth Ministry. The Nominating Committee works year-round in recruiting members to serve on teams of interest.

This structure makes heavy demands upon the time and energy of the pastoral staff, other staff members, and members of the church. While it invites very broad participation in the building of the Kingdom, it also challenges the church to communicate, coordinate, and cooperate effectively.

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

Each committee meets monthly for one to three hours. Church Council meets monthly for two hours.

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

We are a church known to take chances for the right reason. In 2022, our church announced a Lenten theme of “Fasting from Whiteness,” recognizing that Christianity is not exclusively practiced by white people. We widened the scope of our worship to highlight perspectives, readings, and music from other ethnic backgrounds. While our worship was rich and meaningful, conservatives found it offensive. A post on Turning Point Media Platform ignited a national conservative media firestorm, resulting in thousands of negative phone calls/emails and threats to our congregation. Threats required us to have police security outside the building, move worship services online, and to graciously accept a local synagogue's offer to hold our Maundy Thursday service in their house of worship. As with many of these cultural spark points the attention evaporated after Easter but we as a congregation have learned the importance of pastoral and lay leadership alignment, how words can be (mis)interpreted, and the unintended consequences of decisions.

*Can you provide the next minister with a copy of an organization structure, bylaws and/or annual report to further explain the patterns of the church's activity and governance?*

Yes. See also [www.firstunitedoakpark.com/resources/](http://www.firstunitedoakpark.com/resources/)

### 3b. 11-YEAR REPORT

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

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



<b>Church#:</b>	163030										
<b>Assoc:</b>	204	<b>Schedule:</b>	0	First United Church of Oak Park				Oak Park	IL	60301	
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>MEMBERS</b>	<b>AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE</b>	<b>CHR ED/ FAITH FORM</b>	<b>CONFIRMATION</b>	<b>CONFESSION</b>	<b>TRANSFER OR REAFFIRM</b>	<b>DEATHS OR TRANS OUT</b>	<b>OTHER LOSSES</b>	<b>NET MEMBS ADDS-REMOVED</b>		
2013	352	122	138		5	7	7	2	9	8	
2014	329	121	122		5	1	18	5	42	-23	
2015	329	121	122		0	0	0	0	0	0	
2016	349	103	188		6	0	11	7	4	6	
2017	349	103	188		0	0	0	0	0	0	
2018	364	95	91		5	11	0	4	3	9	
2019	375	88	85		5	0	16	5	5	11	
2020	381	115	92		6	0	4	4	0	6	
2021	381	115	92		0	0	0	0	0	0	
2022	381	115	12		12	1	4	6	8	3	
2023	381	115	12		0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>CURRENT EXPENSES</b>	<b>CAPITAL PAYMENTS</b>	<b>BASIC SUPPORT</b>	<b>TOT OTHER UCC GIVING</b>	<b>TOTAL OCWM</b>	<b>OTHER GIFTS</b>	<b>WIDER MISSION</b>	<b>BASIC SUPP% CURR LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL EXPEND</b>	<b>PLEDGES AND OFFERINGS</b>	
2013	\$804,973	\$148,482	\$31,770	\$4,916	\$36,686	\$103,095	\$139,781	3.95	\$1,093,236	\$803,741	
2014	\$881,823	\$57,449	\$31,500	\$3,980	\$35,480	\$119,311	\$154,791	3.57	\$1,094,063	\$846,241	
2015	\$881,823	\$0	\$23,493	\$1,745	\$25,238	\$0	\$25,238	2.66	\$907,061	\$0	
2016	\$866,000	\$0	\$16,204	\$21,675	\$37,879	\$97,571	\$135,450	1.87	\$1,001,450	\$790,046	
2017	\$866,000	\$0	\$13,949	\$0	\$13,949	\$0	\$13,949	1.61	\$879,949	\$0	
2018	\$932,128	\$14,335	\$14,528	\$2,528	\$17,056	\$52,195	\$69,251	1.56	\$1,001,379	\$355,225	
2019	\$865,717	\$52,000	\$15,148	\$1,185	\$16,333	\$64,000	\$80,333	1.75	\$946,050	\$373,000	

The following additions/corrections were sent to the CAARD offices at UCC National. CAARD is in the process of updating its database.

Year	Current Expenses	Capital Payment	Basic Support	Other UCC Gifts	Total OCWM	Other Gifts	Wider Mission Total	Total Expenditures	Pledges & Offerings
2020	\$1,067,369	\$52,000	\$17,104	\$822	\$17,926	\$148,356	\$166,282	\$1,385,651	\$707,648
2021	\$995,943	\$0	\$17,500	\$3,097	\$20,957	\$102,524	\$123,121	\$1,119,064	\$642,178
2022	\$937,252	\$0	\$13,500	\$2,705	\$16,205	\$127,316	\$143,521	\$1,080,773	\$726,976
2023	\$976,555	\$0	\$16,407	\$2,006	\$18,413	\$137,316	\$145,729	\$1,133,284	\$717,825

We have listed our draws and grants, building use and other revenues in the body of our Local Church Profile. Also noted in our Church Profile is the fact that we are a merged, UCC & PCUSA congregation contributing mission support to both denominations in equal measure.

Year	Pledges & Offerings
2015	876,488
2017	743,152
2018	716,196

**Members:** First United is currently in the process of examining our member roster through both a “We Miss You” Connection Team, the Deacon Board and a Council-appointed Task Force. **Christian Ed/Faith Formation/ Confirmation:** The Covid pandemic and the loss of our Youth pastor impacted this aspect of our faith life. Currently, we are in a rebuilding phase with lay members providing leadership to our youth. This year the Church has 9 members in our Quest (confirmation) program.

### **3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS**

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	220	Yes
Number of active non-members:	40	Yes
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	260	Yes

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	65%	Yes
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	20%	Yes
Less than 5 years:	15%	Yes

Number of total participants by age:

0-11	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	<i>Are these numbers an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
30	30	15	15	25	25	35	40	45	Yes

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	5%	Yes

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Households with minors:	20%	Yes
Single adults aged 35-65:	5%	Yes
Joint households with no minors:	50%	Yes
Single adults over 65:	20%	Yes

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	15%	Yes
College:	70%	Yes
Graduate School:	20%	Yes
Specialty Training:	3%	Yes
Other (please specify):	2%	No high school

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	No stats	Yes
Adults who are retired:	No stats	Yes
Adults who are not fully employed:	No stats	Yes

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

Relying on anecdotal observation with no solid data, First United Church presents an occupational profile. The profile of the large number of retirees in the congregation is similar. Occupations of members include:

- Executives, managers, and business owners
- Professionals, including lawyers, teachers, librarians, local government officials, and academics.
- Retail and service workers
- Technical workers
- Health service providers, including physicians, nurses, and mental health professionals.

*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?*

First United Church has limited ethnic diversity. The congregation is mostly White/Non-Hispanic, with some Black/African American, Asian, Latino, and biracial families. Young children are the most racially diverse group, representing the racial and ethnic diversity within, as well as among, families. The church is most diverse in the sexuality and gender identity of members. LBGTQ+ people participate in all aspects of church life, including leadership and clergy. In the past 10 years, over 50% of pastoral staff have identified as LBGTQ+. The church considers its sexuality/gender diversity to be an important part of its identity.

*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)? Please note the date. Comment after the exercise:*

First United Church talks about diversity a great deal but has not used this or any similar inventory.

### **3d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING**

Complete the following chart. Please leave blank any fields that are not applicable to your congregation.

<b>Ways of Gathering</b>	<b>Estimated number of people involved in attendance</b>	<b>Who plans each of the listed gatherings? (list any and all worship planners, such as various lay leaders, pastors, musicians, other staff)</b>
Adult Groups or Classes	15 - 40 in adult education classes weekly.	A committee of 5 individuals and the Associate Pastor plan classes (which are often led by guest lecturers), small groups, and events (such as lectures).
Baptisms <i>(in 2024)</i>	2	Pastoral Staff

Children's Groups or Classes	35 children registered in Church School	A committee of 5 individuals and the Associate Pastor coordinates this effort. A team of 15 volunteers teaches Church School classes.
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	240 each	Pastoral Staff
Church-wide Meals	~10 meals, with attendance ranging from 20-200.	Various committees and staff
Choirs and Music Groups	25-member Choir 10-person band Woodwind Quintet	Interim Pastor; Organist



Church-based Bible Study	25 in weekly Bible studies	Planned and led by the Associate Pastor and lay people
Communion ( <i>served how often?</i> )	Monthly and on holidays	Pastoral staff / Lay servers
Community Meals	None	
Confirmation ( <i>2023</i> )	8	The Associate Pastor and lay people plan and teach confirmation classes weekly from September to May each year.
Drama or Dance Program	None	
Funerals ( <i>2024</i> )	3	Pastoral staff
Intergenerational Groups	Family Camp (20)	Members of the congregation
Outdoor Worship	Regularly in the summer, weather permitting	Pastoral staff
Prayer or Meditation Groups	50	Small group gatherings hosted by lay people

Public Advocacy Work	10-12 organizers, up to 100 participants	Faith In Action subcommittees initiate projects focused on justice, housing, hunger, and children
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Retreats	Summer Youth Work Trip (10 to 15)	Youth Ministry Team (lay people) is responsible for leading retreat planning efforts, along with the youth group advisors and FUSH youth moderators. Each retreat is led by 4-6 adults (advisors).
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community	None	
Weddings (2024)	0	Pastoral Staff
Worship (time slot: 11am; 10am in Summer)	We have an average of 130 people at Sunday worship services.	Worship is planned in weekly team meetings including pastoral staff and music staff. Lay leaders are frequently used to read scripture. Our Worship, Music, and Arts Committee supports the pastoral staff in worship planning.
Youth Groups or Classes	5 to 10 youth per week at each Jr. High and Sr. High youth group	These youth groups are overseen by the Youth Ministry Team and are led by approximately 8 volunteers.
Other: Kindred Spirits	80 members	Members who have informed the church that a gift is included in their estate plan; Initiative led by the Planned Giving subcommittee

Other: Other Intergenerational Groups	Primetime (60+) and Midpoint (40s and 50s), which each draw around 40 people	Members of the congregation
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Additional comments: several small informal groups, such as men's and women's breakfast groups, meet regularly for fellowship and support.

List all members or regular participants in your congregation who are ordained, licensed, or commissioned ministers. Indicate those with current United Church of Christ Three-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a congregation) or Four-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a ministry beyond a congregation).

<b>Name</b>	<b>Three- or Four-Way Covenant? (3 or 4 or no)</b>	<b>Ministry Setting</b>	<b>Type of Ministry Role</b>	<b>Retired? (Y or N)</b>
Lydia Mulkey (UCC)	No	First United Church of OP	Associate Pastor	No
Philip Price (UCC)	No	First United Church of OP	Intentional Interim Minister	No
Beth Dickerson (UCC)	No	First United Church of OP	Various roles	Yes, participates actively; serves on Faith-in-Action Team, the Deacon Board and Fostering Connection Online Group, provides back up pastoral care

Ally Vertigan (UCC)	4-way	Church	Various roles	Yes, participates actively. provides back up pastoral care. when ministers are out of town
Dirk Labuschagne (PCUSA)	4-way	Rush University	Staff Chaplain	Yes, participates actively
Stan Davis (UCC)	No	Church	Various roles	Has participated less as of late
Charles Morris (RCA)	No	Church	Pastor	Yes, participates actively; chairs worship committee and serves on a TF and housing. justice work group; provides back up pastoral care

*If one or more previous pastors or retired ministers currently hold membership in the church,*

*describe their role(s) in the life of the congregation:*

Two other pastors are technically associate members of the church. Rob Leveridge (UCC) lives in Iowa, and Beth Freese-Dammers (PCUSA) lives in a suburb about 10 miles from here, where she serves as a pastor of another congregation. Deborah Kapp (UCC), former interim pastor, remains a member. None of these pastors currently participate in the congregation.

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

<b>Staff Position</b>	<b>Head of Staff?</b>	<b>Compensation (full time, part time, volunteer)</b>	<b>Supervised by</b>	<b>Length of Tenure for current person in this position</b>
Interim Lead Pastor	Yes	Full time	Council Moderator	1 yr
Associate Pastor for Education and Children's Music	No	Full time	Lead Pastor	6 yrs

Director of Nursery School	No	Full time	Lead Pastor/ Nursery School Board	4 yrs
Organist	No	Part time	Lead Pastor	1 yr
Church Administrator	No	Full time	Lead Pastor	4 yrs
Financial Administrator	No	Part time	Lead Pastor	4 yrs

Manager of Building and Grounds	No	Full time	Lead Pastor	11 yrs
Daytime Custodian	No	Full time	Manager of Building and Grounds	4 yrs
Nursery Staff (3)	No	Part time	Associate Pastor for Education	6 yrs 5 yrs 4 yrs
Night Custodian	No	Part time	Manager of Building and Grounds	2 yrs
Choir Director	No	Quarter Time	Lead Pastor	Currently Interviewing

Note: The church employs approximately 20 people in the nursery school as teachers (part time) and aides. All are supervised by the director of the nursery school.

*REFLECTION*

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

With church membership and worship attendees not approaching historical averages (accentuated by pandemic influences) we have a smaller but actively engaged membership. Our expansive ministry offers members a multitude of opportunities for activity and involvement. Yet, the time and resources devoted to carrying on the robust agenda of the church can at times crowd out the attention needed for rich spiritual experience and care for the personal needs of members. Members can also be overly involved, serving on multiple teams and projects stretching their resolve. The church labors hard to achieve balance in these areas.

### **3e. CHURCH FINANCES**

Current annual income (dollars used during most fiscal year)

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$701,278
Nursery School Tuition	\$572,482
Endowment Proceeds:	
General Endowment	\$56,027
Special Mission Endowment	\$60,071
Flowers Music Fund	\$ 4,000
Endowment Draws (above spending policy)	\$0
Fundraising Events - Nursery School	\$69,002
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	
Building Restoration & Repair Projects	\$11,800
Gifts to Our Mission Activities	\$11,174
Grants	\$95,647
Rentals of Church Building	\$16,188
Rentals of Church Parsonage	N/A
Support from Related Organizations (e.g. <i>Women's Group</i> )	N/A
Transfers from Special Accounts	N/A
Other (specify): Credit Card Fee Offset	\$1,868

Other (specify): Miscellaneous Receipts	\$ 264
\$TOTAL	\$1,595,227

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year): \$977,004

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

*Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support. What is the percentage? 27%*

*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)*

No. The following figures represent the UCC half of First United's denominational support:

\$13,950 Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM – Basic Support)

\$ 1,208 One Great Hour of Sharing

0 Strengthen the Church

0 Neighbors in Need

\$ 830 Christmas Fund

*In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered? If calculated as a percentage of the operating budget, what is that percentage? (recommended 10%)*

The Presbyterian Church USA recommends that congregations make an annual per capita contribution for basic support. First United Church contributes half of the recommended amount to the PCUSA and half to the UCC. In addition, the church makes an annual budgeted contribution for additional denominational support to the UCC, currently \$2,000.

*What is the church's current indebtedness?*

*Total amount of loan debt: \$0*

*Are capital and other payments current? Yes*



*If a building program is projected or underway, describe it, including the projected start/end date of the building project and the total project budget.*

- The Church will be replacing its networking equipment before the end of 2024. The cost of this project is projected to be \$15,659 and will be funded through the newly established Capital Expenses and Contingency Reserve fund.
- The Church is currently in the process of developing a list of projects that need to be done. The Church Council will be looking at requests from Buildings and Grounds and other Teams and work to prioritize needs and funding sources.

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

<b>Year(s)</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Impact</b>
2023-2028	Retirement of debt, replenishment bequest to our Special Mission Endowment Fund, and funding for future building, program or equipment needs.	>\$1,750,000	\$1,032,300	Campaign completed. The Church was able to take interest payments off the FY 2025 Operations Budget. (\$42,000 in FY 2024)

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

The church building is a major resource for the mission work of First United Church. In addition to the church’s own use of these spaces, the many mission partners present in the building make intensive use of them throughout the week. They provide food for the hungry, clothing for low-income youth of the community, tutoring for young students from the neighboring Austin area, and a variety of social justice activity and advocacy initiatives. The Lead Pastor is expected to have a significant part in preserving the building for ongoing mission use.

*Does your church have an endowment? Yes*

*What is the market value of the assets? \$3,679,210 (as of 12/09/2024)*

First United Nursery School endowment: \$ 231,969 (as of 6/30/2024)

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

Draws from the General Endowment (GE) and Special Mission Endowment Fund (SMEF), which account for 90% of the endowment, are budgeted annually as regular income, according to the formula detailed below. Draws from smaller donor-restricted funds are made as needed, by vote of Church Council.

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

The annual draw from the GE and SMEF is equal to 4% of calculated market value of each separate fund, defined as the moving average of the market value of the separate funds as of the last day of each of the prior 20 calendar quarters. This formula has been in place since 2007.

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

Annual Draws from GE and SMEF: For use in operations

2024 - \$116,098

2023 - \$121,385

2022 - \$117,573

2021 - \$116,151

2020 - \$141,474

2019 - \$141,688

Special Draws from the Endowment:

2024 - \$ 11,800 - Building Repairs roof repairs

2023 - \$ 11,756 - Substitute Organist prior while conducting search for new organist

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

Assuming that First United Church's investment managers achieve investment performance similar to that of the past 50 years, the endowment should last indefinitely.

*Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:*

The Finance Endowment Sub-Team meets annually with our investment managers to review our portfolio performance and anticipated future interest earnings and advise on an appropriate annual draw from the Endowment Fund that will preserve the principle. This advice is brought back to the Finance Team which then proposes to Council an appropriate draw percentage. In 2017, the draw amount was reduced from 5% to 4% as projected future interest was downgraded and has

been kept at that percentage rate since that time.

*Other Assets*

Reserves (savings): \$300,857, made up of the following:

Operating and Restricted Accounts: \$ 262,000

Nursery School: \$ 38,857

*Describe all buildings owned by the church:*

The church owns one half-square block of property on the northeast corner of Lake Street and Kenilworth Avenue in Oak Park, Illinois. The historic building includes a Sanctuary, Chapel, office space, lounge, large meeting and mission spaces, kitchen, 13 mixed-use church school/nursery school classrooms, food pantry, youth room, and gymnasium.

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

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs? (*worship space, pulpit, fellowship space, facilities, etc.*)

Most of the building is wheelchair accessible, with the exception of the pulpit, altar, gym, youth room, storage tunnel, chapel balcony, sanctuary balcony, food pantry, clothing bank, and some classrooms. All offices and most restrooms are accessible by elevator or ramp.

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

*For example, when was a time the church made a major budget change? How is the budgeting process done? What new ministry initiative has your church financed?*

Starting in 2021, the Church started running large deficit balances at year end. A Budget Deficit Task Force was established by Council in early 2024 to make recommendations to bring our budget into balance. Three major factors were identified as contributing to our financial difficulties: 1) a generous congregation whose pledging households were at static growth, 2) active membership was declining, and 3) operations costs, primarily in personnel and building and grounds expenses, were disproportionately contributing to budget overruns. The Budget Task Force recommended changes for the FY 2025 budget and actions to be taken for the long term in operations revenue and expenses.

Council then established a Budget Band of members of Council to propose which of the

recommendations to put into action both short term and long term. Short term it was decided to pause on rehiring an Associate Pastor for Youth Ministry, pause on replacing a part-time custodian, and to terminate the Director of Music and the Children's Music Director. The FY 2025 budget planned for the margin loan to be paid off, so the Church no longer was making interest payments. Also, the Church decided to expand our traditional definition of mission from supporting outside mission partners to including the internal mission of bringing new people into relationship with God. This new definition required a change from how the Church distributes the Special Mission Endowment annual draw. When the FY 2025 budget was presented to the Congregation and after a serious discussion of the decisions made to balance the budget a "Budget" Barbershop Quartet presented a summary of the budget in song. Hard news delivered with merriment.

A robust and talented music ministry is a beloved part of our identity as a Church community. The FY 2025 budget provides for both equipment upgrades and the possibility of hiring a quarter time choir director. In the meantime, joyful worship music continues with a pastor-led choir and "pop up" opportunities for the congregation to participate in the choir.

Another major initiative has been the establishment of a planned giving program called Kindred Spirits, encouraging members to plan and to inform the church about gifts from their estates. Unrestricted estate gifts are regularly allocated, half to the General Endowment Fund and half to the Special Mission Endowment Fund. Kindred Spirits currently has about 8-members.

### **3f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

*Name one to three significant happenings in the history of your church that have shaped the identity of your congregation. Add the most important event in the life of your church in the past 10 years.*

1. In May 1975, First Congregational Church and First Presbyterian Church, two healthy congregations located one block apart, joined to form First United Church. After a period of alternating use of both church buildings, the First Presbyterian building was sold to Calvary Memorial Church. The proceeds from this sale were invested in the Special Mission Endowment Fund, with the restriction that investment proceeds be used exclusively for mission purposes. This fund has been used exclusively to support mission activities outside of our Church. As a result of recent discussions on the mission of our Church, the congregation has approved an expansion of our Church's definition of mission to include internal activities that support our vision of reaching our local community with a message of love and hope through new programming.

2. Prior to the 1975 merger of our two congregations members of First Congregational Church and First Presbyterian Church, together with Catholic and Jewish community members, played a significant role in social justice issues, particularly within our community, by creating a new community institution aimed at fostering racial integration with the creation of the Oak Park Housing Authority and the Fair Housing Act. Many of our senior members acted as straw buyers to help both African American families and the Oak Park Temple acquire homes and land in Oak Park.

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

Over the past 12 months, First United has undergone a period of realization and decisive action, laying the groundwork for bold transformation:

- **Budget Challenges:** In response to several years of deficit spending, we made tough spending decisions, including not replacing the youth minister and transitioning the Music Ministry Program from salaried music directors to leadership by congregation members. We have experienced a sense of loss as these programs have served as a source of pride and community identity for our church. However, members enthusiastically stepped up to provide those services.
- **Transformational Interim Period:** Our interim leaders have guided us through the In-Between Church exploration process, emphasizing the need to be more invitational and adapting our ministries and worship to engage new generations and others in our community.
- **Congregational Engagement:** Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, our congregation remains actively engaged, though smaller in number. This has strained lay leadership availability and energy. We have initiated several programs to renew member engagement and are seeing positive outcomes.

While this period of reckoning has not always been easy, we have faced these challenges head-on to the best of our abilities. We now enthusiastically seek pastoral leadership that can help us further reimagine our future and guide us toward achieving our vision of being a brighter light in our community.

*Every church has conflict, some minor, some larger. “Where two or three are gathered, there will be disagreement....” Describe your congregation’s values and practices when it comes to conflict.*

*For example, what is an example of a recent conflict and something your congregation learned from it? Describe an occasion when your church experienced conflict without being able to resolve it well. Does your church have policies, protocols or structures for dealing with conflict?*

The First United Senior High Youth Group (FUSH) has been a cornerstone of our identity, both within our Church and the broader community, drawing members from our congregation and beyond. Our annual summer workcamp retreat has been cherished as a rite of passage for the youth.

Historically, FUSH embraced a youth-led philosophy, which, without adequate advisor guidance, evolved into a primarily social gathering. When a new Youth Pastor stepped in, efforts to lead the group faced challenges due to a lack of initial trust-building and guidance for adult advisors. This led to issues like bullying, rule-breaking, instances of marijuana use, and inappropriate social media activity. Consequently, Church leaders decided to pause FUSH programming in the spring of 2019 to reassess and renew the vision for our youth ministry.

Understanding the importance of FUSH to many parents and youth, the Church Council established a Task Force to collaborate with all stakeholders, aiming to develop a new vision for the youth group. While this process saw some initial resistance and disengagement, it laid the groundwork for a more structured and supportive youth ministry.

The pandemic further complicated our program rebuilding, impacting in-person relationship building and overall church participation. Despite these challenges, and the departure of the Youth Pastor in 2023, our Church remains committed to revitalizing this vital ministry. Under dedicated lay leadership, we are beginning to witness renewed engagement and enthusiasm in our youth programs.

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

<b>Staff member’s name</b>	<b>Years of service</b>	<b>UCC Standing (Y/N)</b>
<b><u>LEAD Pastors</u></b>		
Interim Lead Pastor Phil Price	>1	Yes
Lead Pastor John Edgerton	4	Yes
Interim Lead Pastor, Deborah Kapp	1	No

Interim Gap Pastor, Steve Pierce	3 months	No
Lead Pastor, John Cole	2	No
Interim Lead Pastor, Kent Organ	2	Yes
Lead Pastor, Julie Harley	4.5	Yes
Interim Lead Pastor, Jim Brasel	2	No
Lead Pastor, Mark Ramsey	4.5	No
Interim Lead Pastor, Hal Pease	1	No
Interim Lead Pastor, Donna Knight	1	No
Lead Pastor, Ed Bergstraesser	20	Yes
<b><u>Associates/Ministerial Staff (last 10 years):</u></b>		
Lydia Mulkey	7	Yes
Alicia Reese	6	No
Britt Cox	4	No
Leah Fowler	8	Yes
Marylen Marty-Gentile	25 (5 years as pastor)	Yes
Rob Leveridge	4	Yes

Mamie Broadhurst	4	No
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*Comment on what your church has learned about itself and its relationship with persons who provided ministerial leadership:*

Members of the congregation have a variety of opinions on this matter. Some members are concerned that UCC/PCUSA differences in ministerial expectations create confusion and difficulty. Other members do not see this as a problem, focusing more on the character and style of the individual leader. In general, the church has learned that ministerial collaboration, trustworthiness, competence, passion, and creativity, not command and control, suit it best.

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

Yes. Lead Pastor John Cole left after a tenure just shy of two years (2015-2017). The Presbytery of Chicago can provide additional information.

*Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?*

We went through the Presbyterian equivalent.

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

We went through the Presbyterian equivalent.



## 4. WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

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

a. COMMUNITY VISION

b. MISSION InSite

### 4a. COMMUNITY VISION

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

*For example, which service activities has your church participated in this past year?*

*Where has the church participated in global connections of care and justice? What is currently transformational in your church’s engagement with neighbors near or far?*

First United has a reputation in Oak Park as an organization that is proactive in partnering with the village, community leaders, and other organizers in the creation of new community service programs. Between 1990 and 2004, the church was instrumental in founding West Suburban PADS (now Housing Forward), the Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry (now Beyond Hunger), the Walk-In Ministry (now Prevail, a program of Housing Forward), and Learning Edge Tutoring. These organizations continue, in various forms, to serve people experiencing homelessness, people whose needs include such basics as food, people in personal and financial crises, and young students who need academic help. The church continues to house the Beyond Hunger and Learning Edge offering space at a heavily reduced rental fee. Members also volunteer and donate to these organizations. These mission partners are seen by many neighbors as First United Church’s unique contribution to the community.

In addition, First United Church provides space, volunteers, and financial support to the following direct service organizations:

- Kids’ Kloset (clothing bank)
- Cub Scouts and Scouts
- PFLAG
- Numerous Chicago-area musical groups which include City Voices (an adult auditioned choir) and the Pro Musica Youth Chorus

Locally outside the walls, the church assists other providers:

- New Moms (housing, training, and care for young mothers and children)
- Housing Forward (other programs including housing placement and job training)
- BUILD (youth services, gang intervention and prevention)
- Many initiatives concerned with environmental protection, prevention of gun violence, and other issues.
- Financial, social and emotional help, of recent migrant families’ relocation and orientation in the Chicago area

Nationally and globally, denominational and ecumenical efforts are supported:

- Denominational contributions to the UCC and PCUSA, equally divided
- One Great Hour of Sharing
- Church World Service Crop Walk
- Senior high school service trips
- Mission work with Palestinian relief organizations

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

The Associate Pastor is actively involved in association, conference, and General Synod work, including many professional support and education opportunities.

*Many local churches love to tell the story of what they are doing in the community to transform lives. Some have identified certain aspects of their witness into the wider community using language shared with other UCC congregations. (Find more information as desired at [ucc.org](http://ucc.org).) Check any statements below that apply to your UCC faith community.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accessible to All (A2A) | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Peace                            |
| <input 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 type="checkbox"/> God Is Still Speaking (GISS)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other UCC designations:               |
| <input 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?*

The Open and Affirming/More Light stance, adopted in 1996, is a critical piece of First United Church's identity. It is a fundamental expression of openness, love, and justice for all God's people. In the pews and in the pulpit, the church lives out this commitment.

A group led by the Associate Pastor is currently studying the WISE Congregation for Mental Health policy statement, with a view to its eventual adoption.

The congregation is open to consideration of other statements of witness.

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

Locally, the church participates in several programs of the Community of Congregations, including the annual Holiday Food and Gift Baskets and migrant support program.

*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 church's mission is defined in its Purpose Statement, which is described in Section 3a (Congregational Reflections). Our church dedicates a significant amount of time engaging in activities related to our purpose statement, including:

**Worshiping God** through Sunday services, choir rehearsals, bible studies and fellowship events.

**Sharing the Good News of the Gospel** through action. Our Faith In Action Team leads a significant effort to make a positive impact in the world.

**Nurturing Faith** through church school, youth programs, and adult education programs.

**Caring for the Congregation** through a Deacon program that acknowledges the emotional and spiritual needs of its members.

**Loving Neighbors** by serving others generously, locally and globally, through acts of compassion and the sharing of resources.

*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?*

First United Church expects its Lead Pastor to be a visible and engaging representative of our congregation in the community, and to participate appropriately in the denominational work of the wider church.

## **4b. MISSION InSite**

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

The MissionInsite report does not accurately represent our community as it includes only the central business district of Oak Park.

Within a 2-mile radius of First United Church, there are several notable developments, including:

- Little total population change.
- Increase in families is less than the overall population increase, suggesting growth may be the result of adult-only households.
- Recent construction of high-rise apartments has prompted an increase in the population of adults over age 55.
- Actual growth in the number of elementary school children in Oak Park has necessitated the addition of classrooms to elementary schools.
- Chicago's corporate growth may spur population growth in inner-ring suburbs.
- The racial diversity of the 2-mile study area is greater than the racial diversity of the two primary communities served by First United. The White/Non-Hispanic population of the study area is 42.3%, compared to 67% for Oak Park and 82% for River Forest. The Black/African American population of the study area is 40.3% compared to 21.1% in Oak Park and 6.7% in River Forest. Similarly, the Hispanic/Latinx population of the study area is 11.5%, compared to 7.7% for Oak Park and 6.2% for River Forest. These figures suggest that the building of a more diverse congregation will require outreach into the surrounding communities.
- Household incomes in the study area (\$96,500) have been well above state averages for the last 10 years (\$82,000), yet the same area has a slightly higher rate of households below the poverty line (10.4%) than Illinois as a whole (9.9%).

*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?*

First United Church's demographics are similar to those of the immediate area and less diverse than the overall population of the 2-mile-radius area. First United is about 90% White/Non-Hispanic, 6% Black/African American, 2% Hispanic/Latinx, and 2% Asian membership. There's been a slight growth in the non-White members in the last 5 years.

In addition to being less racially diverse, the latest MissionInSite report and 2022 Data U.S.A. reports show the church's primary service area is more affluent than the surrounding

territory. Median household income is \$103,264 for Oak Park. The 2-mile MissionInSite study area has 10.4% of households below the poverty line, while Oak Park has 6.9%.

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

The mission and outward-reaching service elements of First United's ministry are deeply rooted responses to poverty and racial injustice in the area. Other elements of ministry – including the church's spiritual life, enriching worship, and caring culture – are a response to the age ranges and family types of dominant in our church demographics and the immediate areas. Growing diversity in music and worship demonstrates the commitment to reach out to First United's neighborhood and serve its constituents effectively.

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

Local leaders with historical perspective always remember the role of First United Church and its predecessor churches in Oak Park's bold, progressive civic life in the 1960s and 1970s. Oak Park stood almost alone in its refusal to submit to white flight as the population of Chicago and its suburbs re-segregated. Members of the church led the Village Council when it adopted one of the nation's first Open Housing ordinances in 1968. The First Congregational Church provided office space and support for the non-profit organization created to combat re-segregation in residential housing.

Today, we are known for our outstanding nursery school, as a leader in mission work, serving as a hub for service organizations, and our generous donations to Mission Partners (enabled by our SMEF fund).

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

New members mention that they have found a church that truly welcomes and embraces them, regardless of sexuality, gender identity, or religious background. Others are attracted to our visible commitment to social justice and the range of volunteer opportunities. New members with young children are drawn by our Christian Education program. Some families migrate from the Nursery School or Sunday evening youth programs to Sunday morning attendance.

## 5. REFERENCES

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

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

### REFERENCE 1

Phil Price, Current Interim Pastor

[pprice@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:pprice@firstunitedoakpark.com), 708- 386-5215

### REFERENCE 2

Michele Zurakowski, Executive Director, Beyond Hunger; Resident mission partner of First United

[michele@beyondhunger.org](mailto:michele@beyondhunger.org), 708-434-0085

### REFERENCE 3

Ben Lynch

Pastor, neighboring Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church

[ben@fairoakspres.org](mailto:ben@fairoakspres.org), 708-386-4920

### PROMPTS FOR REFERENCES

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

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

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

Anything else you wish to share.

## **6. CLOSING THOUGHTS**

- a. CLOSING PRAYER
- b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT
- c. CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION VALIDATION

### **6a. CLOSING PRAYER**

*Include here any prayer or dream for the minister you imagine journeying toward you... a poem, for example, or a Scripture passage or a piece of music that is meaningful to your Search Committee:*

Gracious Creator, Mother and Father, we seek your divine guidance as we search for a new pastor who will have the capabilities and strength of a shepherd for our congregation. You have called us to be a flock, united in faith and love and to serve those who need us, and we trust that You already know the servant You have chosen to lead us.

Lord, we pray for the individual you are preparing to serve as our pastor. Strengthen their heart and equip them with the grace and imagination to lead our transformation with creativity, energy, humility, and courage. Surround them with your peace and assurance as they discern your call to join our church family. May they be someone who reflects Your all-inclusive love and who has a passion for tending Your people, seeking the lost, and nurturing the faithful. We ask that you bless their journey as you prepare them to inspire this new chapter in our ministry.

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 ministerial positions is strengthened when vital information is openly shared by covenantal partners. To that end, we attest that, to the best of our abilities, we have provided information in this profile that accurately represents our church. We have not knowingly withheld any information that would be helpful to candidates. As the committee charged with the responsibility for identifying and recommending suitable new minister for our church, we have been authorized to share the information herein with potential candidates. We understand that a candidate may wish to secure further knowledge, information, and opinions about our church. We encourage a candidate to do so, recognizing that an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing and healthy relationships between calling bodies and persons seeking a ministry position.

1. *Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile? (for example, church council or consistory, transition team, etc.)*

- Pastor Nominating Committee. Seven adult members recommended by Church Council and elected by the congregation have accepted God's call to do this work.
- The congregation. All were invited to join in two Congregational Conversations providing information and guidance to the committee. About 60 individual members participated.
- One liaison member of Church Council. This experienced leader has attended meetings of the Pastor Nominating Committee and provided valuable guidance.
- The Church Council. Council has reviewed and approved the Profile.
- The Interim Lead Pastor. This outstanding professional leader has encouraged the committee, providing useful interpretation and advice.

2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

Signed:

Name / Title / Date: Tim Dull and Jim Heininger, Co-Chairs PNC



## **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, ministerial 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 Edney Stilley

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

Email: shernelledneystilley@ilucc.org

Phone: 708-701-4933

Date: February 08, 2025

**UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**



This document is created through support to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and is only possible through the covenantal relationships of all settings of the United Church of Christ.

*"Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God!'" – Mark 11:22*