

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF *Akron* UCC



Rooted in Christ



Fostering Justice



Celebrating Diversity

First Congregational Church of Akron UCC
292 East Market Street Akron, OH 44308
(330)253-5109



<http://www.akronfcc.org>

<https://linktr.ee/akronfcc>

<https://www.facebook.com/AkronFCC>

<https://www.instagram.com/AkronFCC>

<https://www.youtube.com/@AkronFCC>

United Church of Christ

UCC Association: Living Water

Rev. Dr. Elena Larssen, Association General Minister

330-592-7127 agm@livingwaterone.org

UCC Conference: Heartland Conference

800.282.0740 Ext. 1

Heartland Conference

PO Box 1230, Worthington, OH 43085

Additional Formal Ecumenical Affiliation

National Association of Congregational Christian Churches

Current size of membership:

514 Total Members. 290 Active members

Virtual worship services

On Sunday at both the 9am and 11am services, and on holidays

<https://www.facebook.com/AkronFCC>

<https://www.youtube.com/@AkronFCC>

Who We Are

First Congregational Church of Akron UCC was founded in 1833 as Akron's first formally organized congregation. We are a historic community with a forward-looking heart, dually affiliated with the **National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC)** and the **United Church of Christ (UCC)**.

Our ministry is centered in a landmark 1910 Bedford limestone building, where we are soon to celebrate 10 years as an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation. We unconditionally affirm all people regardless of race, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status.



Our Vision

We strive to be an intergenerational home where every individual is valued. Our mission extends beyond our walls into the heart of Akron, advocating for marginalized groups and expanding our outreach through strong community partnerships.

Where Is Our Church Headed?

First Congregational Church of Akron UCC is headed towards becoming a more inclusive and engaged community that emphasizes social justice, spiritual growth, and collaborative leadership. With a strong commitment to social justice initiatives, the church aims to amplify its impact beyond its walls by advocating for marginalized groups and expanding its outreach ministries. Additionally, the congregation aspires to become more representatively intergenerational and engage more with its surrounding neighborhoods, reflecting the demographic diversity of Akron while ensuring that all individuals feel welcomed and valued. The congregation is moving towards a vision of inclusivity and community impact, focusing on spiritual growth and collective action that embody the values of love, justice, and service.

Who is God calling us to become?

God is calling First Congregational Church of Akron UCC to become a congregation that embodies the following characteristics:

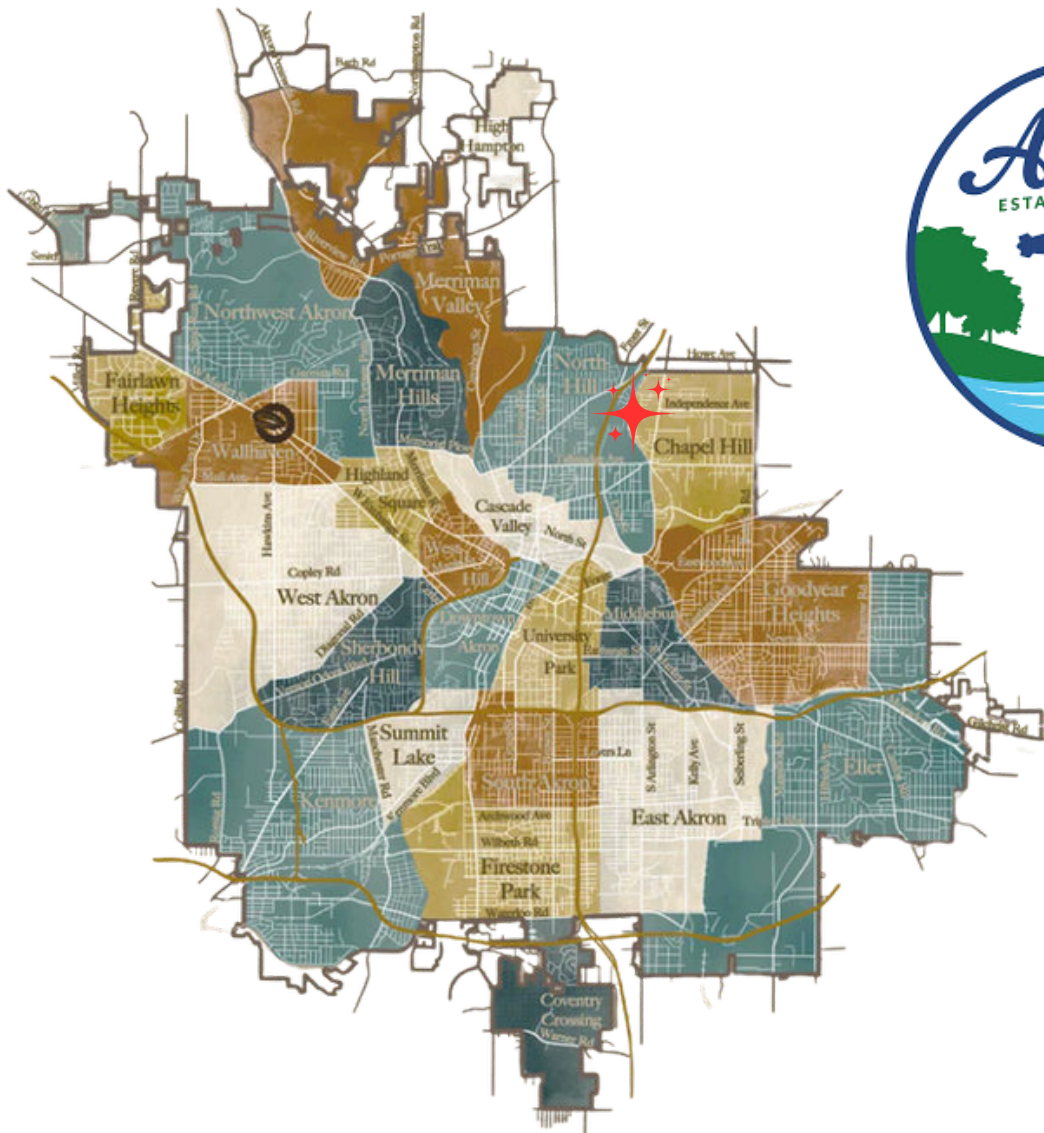
We want to become a congregation that values and practices collaborative leadership, where all members are encouraged to participate in decision-making and ministry activities. This involves creating a culture of shared leadership, where the collective wisdom and gifts of the congregation are utilized to achieve common goals. The church is called to be a model of cooperative and democratic governance so we can continue to be a strong community where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and accepted. A community committed to working for social justice, advocating for the voiceless and helping to foster an environment where spiritual growth is the priority.

We realize that in order to achieve those goals we must also be a community that is open to change and innovation and willing to adapt to new challenges.



What we value about living in our area

We value the diverse population and the small-town feel of the Akron area. It's conveniently close to large cities with professional sports teams and offers great park systems at the county, state, and federal levels. The weather is moderate, with four distinct seasons; never too hot or too cold. Akron is home to The University of Akron, a large state university, and several other nearby universities and colleges. It offers business opportunities in all fields, excellent access to modern airports, world class medical systems, and a well-maintained state and federal road system. Northeast Ohio provides opportunities for everyone to live a good life both physically and spiritually.



Associate Pastor

Full Time, Settled

Start Date:

TBD

Description:

We are searching for an Associate Pastor who will work collaboratively with the Senior Pastor to facilitate worship, nurture discipleship, and foster community engagement.

Core Competencies & Qualities

We are seeking a collaborative leader who embodies Jesus's values of **love**, **justice**, and **service**.

- **Visionary & Creative:** Ability to think innovatively about faith formation and community impact.
- **Empathetic Shepherd:** A compassionate presence capable of providing emotional support and spiritual nurturing to a diverse membership.
- **Inclusive Advocate:** A commitment to social justice and a heart for promoting equity within the church and the wider community.
- **Collaborative Partner:** A team player who can partner effectively with the Senior Minister and lay leadership.

Qualifications

- **Ordained Clergy:** Must hold a graduate-level theological degree and be in good standing with the UCC or have dual standing with an affiliated denomination.
- **Mission-Aligned:** Deeply embraces the Open and Affirming philosophy and outreach-driven mission of AkronFCC UCC.
- **Experienced Leader:** Demonstrated success in volunteer management and working with people of diverse ages.
- **Engaged Practitioner:** Experience or strong interest in community development and social advocacy.
- **Technologically Proficient:** Familiarity with basic Microsoft/Google Office suites and modern communication tools.

Description of Duties

The Associate Pastor works collaboratively with the Senior Pastor to facilitate worship, nurture discipleship, and foster community engagement.

1. Faith Formation & Discipleship

- Lead intergenerational programming that fosters connectedness across all ages.
- Oversee the spiritual growth of the congregation, from children's ministries to adult education.
- Serve as a resource for volunteers engaged in faith formation and community-building activities.

2. Mission & Social Justice

- Organize and coordinate social justice initiatives and volunteer engagement.
- Act as the primary advocacy point-of-contact for local ministry partners, including Mason Elementary and local social services, to address neighborhood needs.

3. Worship & Preaching

- Collaborate on weekly worship planning and lead liturgical elements.
- Preach regularly (approximately every 4-6 weeks) and preside at the sacraments.

4. Leadership & Administration

- Supervise the Coordinator for Children's Ministries and childcare staff.
- Support volunteer development and assist with general church administration.

Compensation & Scope

- Scope of Work: Full-time (40-50 hours weekly / 10-12 units).
 - Compensation: Package offered at or above Heartland Conference Guidelines.
 - Benefits: Comprehensive package including Pension, Medical, Dental, and Vision coverage.
- 

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

God is calling our congregation to continue to provide essential community leadership in the areas of food justice, community partnership, inclusivity and social justice. Our community faces many challenges, including homelessness, food insecurity, and de-churching; our congregation remains committed to addressing these challenges. Here are some examples:

Feeding Hope Food Pantry

In 1980, a community food cupboard was created by First Congregational Church of Akron UCC, which gave way to a fully functioning food pantry, currently serving over 400 families per month. In the last ten years, the Feeding Hope Food Pantry has expanded rapidly, partnering with local farms, businesses, and organizations to help provide fresh food and other necessities to those in need.



FOOD JUSTICE

Meeting immediate needs.

PB&J Backpacks

PB&J Backpacks is a weekly ministry that serves the elementary students at Mason Community Learning Center. Every Friday during the school year, volunteers pack 156 bags of food, which are delivered to the children at Mason CLC, who may not have food at home over the weekend.

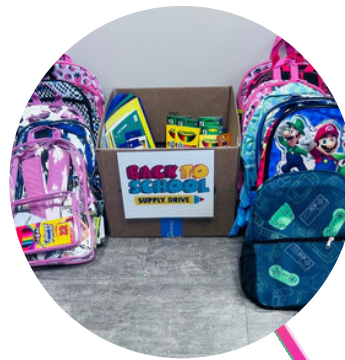


Mason School Ministry

Mason Community Learning Center is an Akron Public elementary, inner-city school with 325+ students in pre-school through sixth grade. The school's dedicated staff provides the best learning environment available to a school population that is in constant transition.

What started in 2003 to provide winter coats for children, has expanded into a multifaceted community ministry, with 30 dedicated volunteers. These are some of the ways in which our church supports the families of Mason CLC.

- Donate backpacks and school supplies
- Provide winter coats to each child yearly
- Financial support for purchases of smart boards or other equipment for classrooms
- Support for year-end celebrations for students



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Investing in neighbors & partnerships.

Akron First

Akron First Collaborative is a new ecumenical team at work, and First Congregational Church of Akron UCC is part of it. Located in the neighboring and former home of First United Methodist Church, Akron First Collaborative is a shared community hub in University Park where organizations and neighbors come together to strengthen the neighborhood through partnership, resources and opportunity.



LGBTQ+ Community Nights

LGBTQ+ Community Nights are a safe place for LGBTQ+ people to come together, explore their faith, and build community. Gatherings take place about once a month and are held in different locations—a facilitator's home, local restaurant, or the church—depending on the month and activity planned.

INCLUSIVITY

Creating belonging and affirmation.

Akron Pride

Akron Pride Day is the city's annual LGBTQ+ Pride celebration, held each August in downtown Akron and featuring a full day of music, art, food, and community events, including the annual Equity March. AkronFCC UCC was a founding sponsor and is still an active participant, marching in the Equity March and staffing a booth at the fair.



Social Justice

Addressing systemic issues and promoting equity.

Social Justice

From the beginning, when the wider Akron community has found itself at the center of turmoil, our church has opened its doors to help become a safe space to assist as best it can. During the Jayland Walker shooting protests, we served as a space for community forums and support. During the development of a community wide project commemorating Sojourner Truth and her famous *Ain't I A Woman* speech, our church provided a meeting space for community partners, contributed financially to the development of a memorial, created and held programming, and helped to promote local events. The annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. event in Akron takes place at the First Congregational Church of Akron UCC. It features community speakers, youth performances, local leaders, and MLK scholarships.



NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the week, AkronFCC UCC is a hub of community activity. Many organizations regularly meet in our conference rooms, including:



Alcoholics Anonymous

First Congregational Church of Akron UCC played a pivotal role in the founding of AA, serving as a meeting place where Dr. Bob and early members began their recovery work in 1935. The Church currently hosts four weekly meetings.



Freedom BLOC Akron

The Freedom BLOC (Building Leadership, Power, and Political Infrastructure) is a community organizing group focusing on housing, political education, and safety. The Freedom BLOC meets regularly using our Upper Room.



Indivisible Akron

Indivisible Akron is a welcoming grassroots force, rallying community power to protect democracy, defend rights, and build a vibrant, inclusive future. The Church is home for their regular and board meetings.



PFLAG

Serving the greater Akron, Ohio area, PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) offers support through monthly meetings, welcoming LGBTQ+ people, those who love them, and allies. PFLAG has met monthly in our church for several years.



SSOULE

The SSOULE (Survivors Sharing Our Unique Life Experiences) Group is a HIV support group, started January, 16 2019, in Summit County. Since its inception, this group has met monthly in our church.

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

We have two dedicated worship spaces, the Meetinghouse and the Upper Room. The same sermon is usually preached at both services. The sermons are engaging, relatable, informative, and spiritually enriching. The topics are seasonally relevant. A lectionary is commonly used to inform services, but is not a requirement.

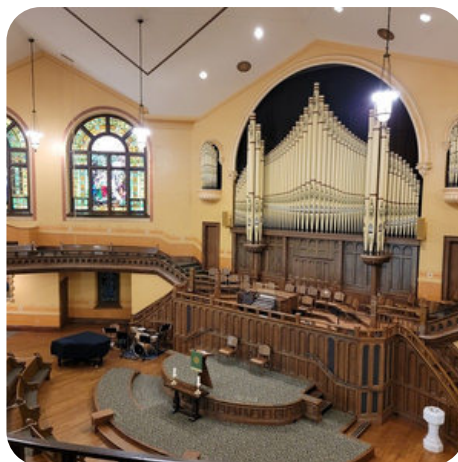
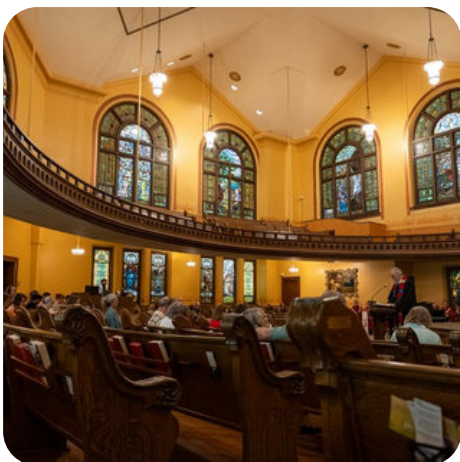
Upper Room - 9am Worship Gathering

The Upper Room hosts the 9am service. The atmosphere is relaxed and casual; the music is more contemporary. Communion is celebrated weekly. The service is streamed online.



Meetinghouse - 11am Worship Gathering

The Meetinghouse hosts the 11am service. The atmosphere and the music are more traditional, including a blend of hymns, strong organ, choir, and handbell performances. Communion is celebrated monthly. The service is streamed online.





The Chapel

We also have a Chapel that is currently used for other ministries, special worship gatherings, church social events, weddings, and concerts.



Combined Worship Gatherings

During the summer and on occasions, our congregation gathers for a joint service at 10am in the Meetinghouse. The service is a beautiful blend of both traditional and contemporary styles.



Worship and Spiritual Practices:

1. **Inclusive Liturgy:** Services are designed to be inclusive and welcoming, with language and practices that reflect the church's commitment to diversity and justice.
2. **Engaging Sermons:** Sermons are focused on applying the teachings of Christ to contemporary life, encouraging members to live out their faith in meaningful ways.
3. **Active Participation:** Worship often includes opportunities for members to actively participate, such as through communal prayers, shared reflections, and interactive elements.
4. **Music and Arts:** The church has a strong tradition of incorporating music and the arts into worship, using these elements to enhance the spiritual experience and foster a sense of community.

Spiritual Growth Opportunities:

The church offers various programs and activities to support spiritual growth, including:

1. **Bible Study Groups:** Regular study groups that explore scripture and its application to modern life.
2. **Prayer Meetings:** Opportunities for communal and individual prayer, fostering a deeper connection with God.
3. **Retreats and Workshops:** Events focused on spiritual development, personal reflection, and community building.
4. **Service Projects:** Activities that encourage members to put their faith into action by serving others and advocating for justice.

Through these practices and commitments, First Congregational Church of Akron UCC seeks to nurture a vibrant and active faith community that embodies the teachings of Christ and works towards the well-being of all God's creation.

MUSIC MINISTRY

On Sunday mornings, worship may include the voices of the Chancel Choir, the sound of our historic Casavant Frères pipe organ, congregational singing led by the Praise Band, handbells, piano, guitar, and other instrumental music. Whether traditional or contemporary in style, music plays a meaningful role in helping to lead the congregation in worship.

Chancel Choir

The Chancel Choir plays a large part in our music ministry and regularly leads hymns during traditional worship services, typically held at 11am in our Meetinghouse. Accompanied by organ or piano, the choir offers a mix of hymns and anthems throughout the year and contributes significantly to special services and seasonal celebrations.



Handbell Choir

Our Handbell Choir participates throughout the year, including during holiday and special services. Their music adds a unique and much-loved dimension to worship and is appreciated by both ringers and listeners alike.



Praise Band

The Praise Band leads music during contemporary worship services at 9am in our Upper Room and special events. Featuring vocalists, keyboard, guitar, bass, percussion, and other instruments, the group helps create an engaging worship experience through a variety of contemporary Christian music.



Steel Drum Band

The Steel Drum Band is a volunteer ensemble that performs periodically, often during combined worship services and special occasions. Directed by Matt Dudack of The University of Akron, the group brings energy and joy to worship while showcasing another facet of our musical life.



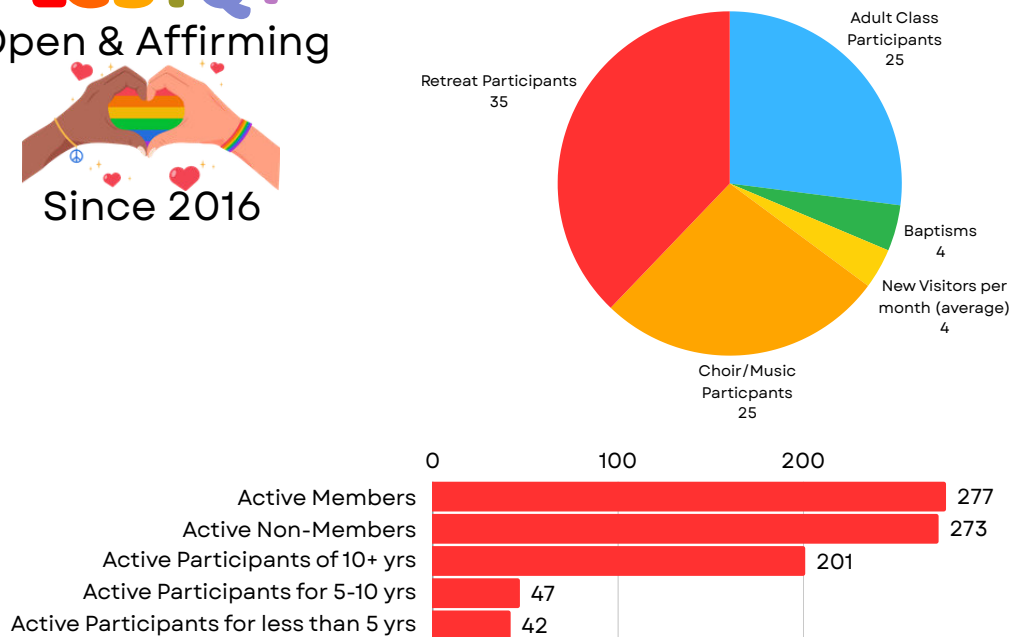
***Music@AkronFCC* UCC**

First Congregational Church of Akron UCC hosts the *Music@AkronFCC* Concert Series, a vibrant community arts ministry that brings nationally recognized musicians, local ensembles, university performers, and community partners into our historic building. Leveraging the church's exceptional acoustics and long-standing reputation as a premier performance venue, the series offers free and low-cost concerts that enrich the cultural life of Akron while creating opportunities for community engagement, outreach, and hospitality. Through music and the arts, the church extends its mission of welcome, connection, and service beyond its congregation and into the wider community.



Significant Moments For AkronFCC UCC

In 2016, First Congregational Church of Akron UCC adopted an Open and Affirming statement publicly affirming its commitment to welcoming and including LGBTQ+ individuals in all aspects of church life. This decision highlighted the church's dedication to inclusivity and diversity, shaping its identity as a safe and welcoming space for all people.



Life Together at AkronFCC UCC

Worship, learning, celebration, service, and fellowship—these moments offer a glimpse into the many ways we grow in faith and community together.



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?

Our church, predominantly made up of white members, is a warm and welcoming place that embraces a rich tapestry of diversity within our congregation. While many of us share similar backgrounds, we are fortunate to have members who are African-American, Asian-American, LGBTQ+, and first-generation immigrants. Their presence enriches our community and brings a variety of perspectives and experiences to our church life.

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs?

Most spaces within the building are handicapped accessible, with assistance from ramps and an elevator. The main restrooms are ADA accessible.

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

Our congregation is blessed with a remarkable range of talents and professions that reflect the diversity of our members. Some are educators, while others work in fields like law, food service, healthcare, business, and technology.

This variety in our professional lives not only showcases the diverse skills and experiences within our congregation but also strengthens our church's mission. Each of us brings something unique to the table, using our expertise to support and uplift one another, while also contributing to the wider community in meaningful ways.

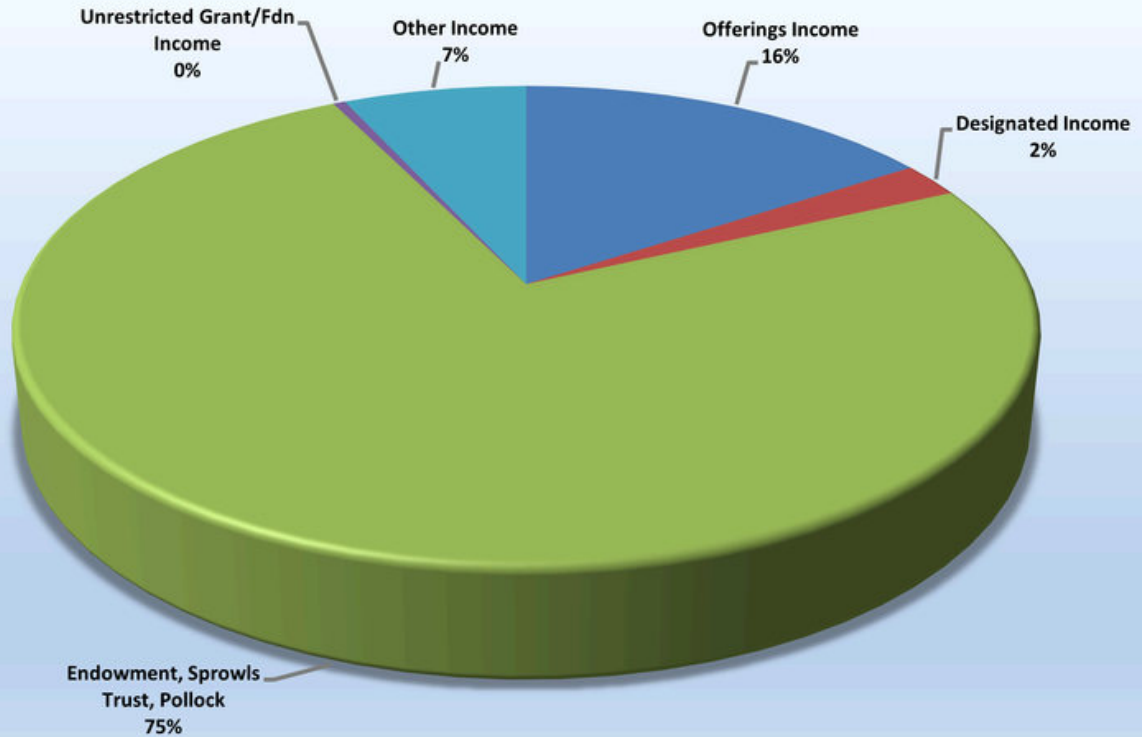
Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?

Yes. In regard with a retired pastor who was chairing a board and serving on council hence, disrespecting boundaries.

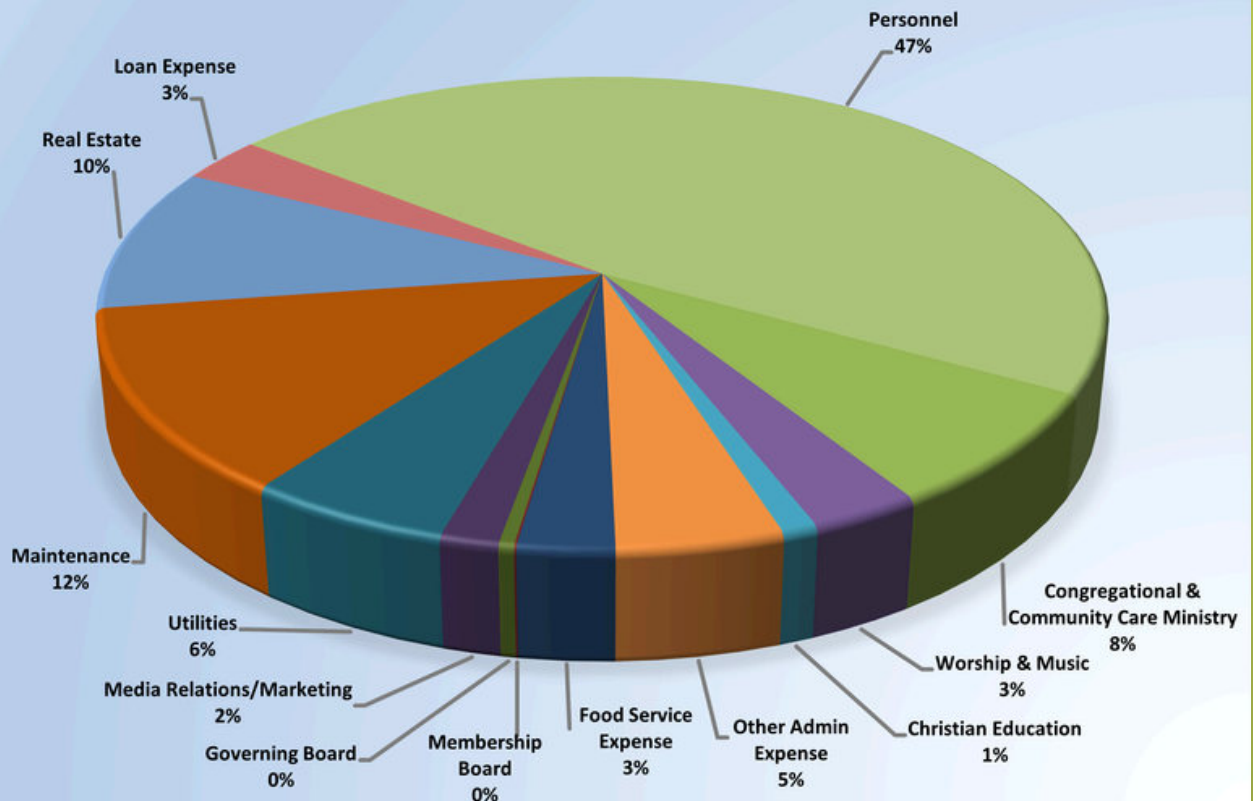
Has a past pastor been the subject of a Fitness Review while at your church?

No.

AKRONFCC INCOME
\$1,077,328



AKRONFCC EXPENSES
\$1,008,486



Current Annual Income: \$1,077,328

Source Amount: Donations, Grants, Interest Income, Endowment Draw, Other

Annual Offerings and Pledges: \$169,638

Endowment: \$17,528,726

Designated Grants: \$0

Unrestricted Grants: \$4,835

Fundraising/Special Events: \$0

Current Annual Expenses: \$1,008,486

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

15%

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

No.

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

- ☒ 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? If calculated as a percentage of operating budget, what is that percentage?

Budgeted fixed donation of \$3,000 (0.3%)

What is the church's current indebtedness?

Total amount of loan debt: \$0

Reason for debt: n/a

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.

N/A

Does your church have an endowment?

Yes.

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

Regular monthly draw.

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

Draw in 2026 was 5%. Five years ago, the draw was 4.6%.

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

Regular monthly draw set at 5% to support church budget. Budget has been supplemented by the regular monthly draw for the past five years.

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

Assuming a 0% investment growth, current endowment would last for the next 24.5 years. If the investment growth was projected to be 5%, the endowment would last indefinitely.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

Other Assets:

Reserves (savings): \$69,555

Investments (other than endowment): \$1,007,092

Does your church have a parsonage? no

Describe all buildings owned by the church:

One building that houses the Meetinghouse, two separate worship spaces, Fellowship Hall, offices, youth programming wing, and food pantry.

REFERENCE

To Whom It May Concern,

I am pleased to offer this letter in support of First Congregational Church of Akron as the congregation seeks to call an Associate Pastor. While I am not a member of AkronFCC, I have come to know the congregation and several of its leaders through shared work in the broader Akron community, particularly through ecumenical collaboration and neighborhood-focused redevelopment efforts in University Park.

My relationship with AkronFCC is unusual, in that I know the congregation less through Sunday worship life and more through the ways it shows up institutionally and relationally in the city. I participate in an ecumenical advisory team connected to the ongoing work of First United Methodist Church of Akron, AkronFCC's neighboring congregation, and I also serve on the board of Living the Legacy, a community development corporation (CDC) that emerged from the vision and leadership of AkronFCC. Through those experiences, I have observed a congregation that remains deeply committed to the long arc of community engagement, partnership, and public service, even while navigating the very real challenges facing many historic urban churches.

What stands out most is AkronFCC's willingness to think beyond itself. Many congregations speak about collaboration or neighborhood impact in abstract terms, but AkronFCC has repeatedly demonstrated openness to shared work, shared leadership, and long-term investment in the well-being of the surrounding community. The congregation carries both institutional memory and institutional imagination. It values its history, while also recognizing that the future of the church may require new partnerships, new models of ministry, and increased attention to the needs and opportunities present in the city around it.

AkronFCC is well-positioned for a pastor who is energized by collaboration, community presence, relationship-building, and adaptive leadership. The congregation is connected to a network of civic, nonprofit, and faith-based partners that care deeply about the future of Akron and University Park. There is enormous potential for meaningful ministry at the intersection of congregational life, neighborhood engagement, and creative partnership. This is work that requires patience, emotional intelligence, humility, and a willingness to build trust over time.

I believe AkronFCC has the capacity to be an important anchor institution in the life of the city for years to come. The congregation's future will not simply be shaped by preserving what has been, but by discerning what faithful presence and meaningful ministry can look like in a changing urban context. That work will require thoughtful pastoral leadership, and it also offers remarkable opportunities for creativity, impact, and transformation.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share these reflections and would be happy to speak further if additional perspective would be helpful.

Sincerely,

Rev. Joy Fenton-Jones
Board Member, Living the Legacy CDC
Executive Director, 915 N Main, Inc.
Pastor, Pilgrim United Church of Christ & First Christian Church of Cuyahoga Falls

REFERENCE



July 2, 2026

First Congregational Church of Akron
292 E. Market St.
Akron, OH 44308

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing to submit our recommendation of friendly and collaborative work with this First Congregational Church and their leadership. In 2017 when our Chapter of PFLAG Akron was looking for a new place to host our meetings, FCC opened their arms and welcomed us. PFLAG Akron is a 501c3 that serves the Greater Akron LGBTQ+ Community and has been doing so since 1983. FCC has stated they are open and affirming, and their actions and welcome prove their words to be true.

FCC also worked collaboratively when we found we had a potential security issue. They teamed up and helped us find a solution to our safety concerns. We are forever grateful for that.

We are happy to make FCC a place we have our monthly support group meetings, as our membership feels welcome and safe here.

I welcome any questions.

Sincerely,

Lynette Kreidler, President
PFLAG Akron 330-705-9521
pflagakron@gmail.com

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 a suitable associate 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 congregations and persons seeking a ministry position.

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

Search and Call Team and Senior Minister, Rev. R. Brooke Baker.

Elizabeth Wilson
DeAnn Clemons
Judy Young
Mickey Shah
Matt Kalgreen

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: 

Name / Title: Rev. Dr. Elena Larssen, Association General Minister

Email: agm@livingwaterone.org

Phone: 330-592-7127

Date: July 22, 2026

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.

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



“Jesus answered them, ‘Have faith in God!’” – Mark 11:22

SEARCH & CALL TEAM



Elizabeth Wilson



Mickey Shah



DeAnn Clemons



Matt Kalgreen



Judy Young