

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

*The Church-in-the-Gardens
Forest Hills, NY*

Pastor, Settled, Full-Time

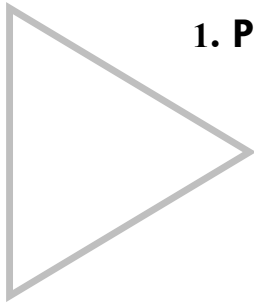
New York Conference, Metropolitan Association

[Validation Date]

LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE CONTENTS

- Position Posting
- Who Is God Calling Us To Become?
- Who Are We Now?
- Who Is Our Neighbor?
- References
- Consent and Validation

*“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.”*



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: The Church-in-the-Gardens

Street address: 50 Ascan Avenue, Forest Hills, NY 11375

Supplemental web links: www.thecitg.org,

Facebook: The Church-in-the-Gardens

Additional ecumenical affiliations (*e.g. denominations, communions, fellowships*): United Church of Christ

Conference: New York Conference

Association: Metropolitan Association

UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person:

Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams,

Associate Conference Minister for Clergy and Authorized Ministry Concerns

315-446-3073 mwilliams@uccny.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?

We are seeking a minister to go with us on a journey of revitalization and transformation. Our church has been here for more than 100 years and we look forward to another 100 years but recognize the challenges in our present and in our future. We need energy to move past hurts. We need clarity to communicate better with one another. We need to be reminded of how relationships matter – our relationship to others as brothers and sisters in Christ, our relationship to God and our relationship with the community beyond our walls.

Photographs: Advent worship service



Congregants



“Brunch with Barnabas” Transformation Team event



Some choir members



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

We value the diversity of the people who live in Forest Hills and Queens. It provides for a rich interweave of cultures and backgrounds.

Current size of membership: 101 – 200 members

Languages used in ministry (other than English):

We conduct worship services in English but there are many members and friends of the congregation who speak other languages.

Position Title: Pastor

Position Duration: Settled, Full Time

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)

Position Description: Pastor

Full-time Settled (Full-time means the ability to respond to church and community needs almost every day, on very short notice when urgently needed.)

Position Summary:

The Pastor of The Church-in-the-Gardens is called to minister to the spiritual needs of our diverse covenantal community, and represents the church in greater Queens and in the world. A love of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and a life of discipleship, undergird these roles.

Expectations and Responsibilities:

- 1) The pastor creates Worship each Sunday in a variety of Praise or traditional formats. Recent events call for the ability to present services via video conference and posting services online. Through the sermon and inspired leadership, the pastor ensures a worshipful and prayerful time, energizing spiritual connections, and invites the presence of the Holy Spirit. The pastor provides scholarly exegeses and liturgy,

music, prayer, volunteer activities within the service, and supervision of the bulletin. The pastor's sermons bring life to our sacred stories, relevance to our world and our daily lives through an understanding of the Hebrew Bible, the New Covenant and the history of Christianity from biblical times to the present.

- 2) As the leader of the covenantal community, the pastor guides and collaborates with members and non-members to foster renewed faith and spiritual growth, democracy and amity within all boards and committees, and a sincere welcome to all who come through our doors. With the vital support of the pastor, the covenantal community provides lay leadership ministries for Bible study, adult religious education, Sunday School and Youth ministry, an open invitation to communion, loving community activities, and service to the world.
- 3) The pastor joins with lay leadership to create and communicate formal short-term and long-term strategic plans to carry out the missions of the church and to grow, revitalize and transform the church community. The pastor works effectively with volunteers who provide administrative support to ensure the carrying out of the missions, outreach to the community, and the integrity of financial and physical plant resources. Oversees financial procedures and physical plant resources as lay volunteers ensure stewardship with integrity.
- 4) The pastor represents God's love and conveys this love through all the services of the church and gives support to the larger community. Non-members may turn to us for weddings, funerals, and other special worship services, in addition to a loving welcome.
- 5) The pastor listens to and counsels members and other participants of our covenantal community as they face spiritual and personal crises, distress, illness, and sorrow. The pastor works with community resources on behalf of those in need, and when necessary makes direct referrals for concrete support.
- 6) The pastor oversees the staff of the church, in collaboration with the Trustees and Personnel Committee, to support their continuous good work, ensure an equitable workplace with clearly structured internal and community communications, and gives appropriate feedback on workplace performance.
- 7) The pastor is called to represent The Church-in-the-Gardens in the greater Queens community and in the world. Engagement and conciliatory relationships with other Houses of Worship from diverse religious traditions, the NY Conference of the UCC, local social service and religious organizations, and NYC governmental organizations, is essential to maintain these connections.

Personal Qualities of the Successful Pastor:

The pastor has a loving and reflective commitment to their continuing discernment and Call, and is grounded in the intellectual and spiritual traditions of the Bible. An open heart and understanding for those who are from different cultural and religious traditions is essential to The Church-in-the-Gardens, as we continue to extend a loving welcome to all who enter here. The successful candidate nurtures themselves and our community, ensuring a healthy life balance, and a continuing commitment to intellectual and spiritual growth and integrity. The pastor conveys the promise of hope to all those in need or who are stressed in our difficult times.

Core Competencies:

List three core competencies that you imagine could be foundational in your next minister's relationship with the church.

- Able to transform and revitalize the congregation
- Conciliatory leadership style that can bring people together and elicit compromise while getting things done
- Strong theological background, equipped with the deeply personal experience of God's grace, faith, love, and hope reflected in powerful sermons

1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

Salary Basis (*from the Call Agreement Workbook, equal to Cash Salary plus Value of Parsonage/Housing Allowance*): guidance of the UCC Compensation Guidelines

Benefits (*choose one*): Salary plus Benefits

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*)? We do not have housing available but will provide a housing allowance.

Comment on the residential/commuting expectations for your next minister. We would like our minister to live within a reasonable commute.

State any incentives (*e.g. school debt reduction or retention bonus after a certain number of years in position*): to be discussed as necessary

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

- The New York Conference has Communities of Practice.
- The Metropolitan Association has clergy gatherings
- The Parish Resource Center in Valley Stream
- Previous ministers have been regularly involved in the inter-faith clergy group in Forest Hills

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

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

The ministry goals of our next pastor will respond to the needs of our community for healing, leadership in children's and youth education, and they will handle conflict in a calm and loving way. The pastor will help us recognize where we can impact social justice versus being embroiled in the political climate. Our Christian identity and fellowship should attract more families to create a vibrant and more diverse congregation. The new pastor will work effectively with all boards and committees to provide vision and move toward goals.

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

Worship and fellowship will glorify our faith and move us toward social justice and outreach as disciples. We are looking for a minister to inspire us to grow our reach beyond our own walls. This person will remind us and push us to help others.

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

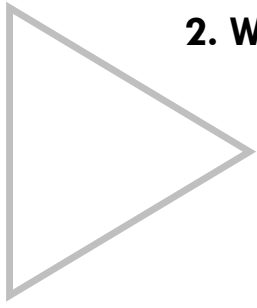
Worship services are led in English with some praise music/hymns in other languages. As we are located in a multi-cultural neighborhood and city, it would be a blessing to have a minister with multiple language skills although this is not a requirement. Prior experience in a multi-cultural environment would be welcome.

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.

- **Exhibiting A Spiritual Foundation & Ongoing Spiritual Practice** – We are looking for a spiritual leader, someone who can help us grow spiritually as individuals as well as a community.
- **Building Transformational Leadership Skills** – As a congregation, we have been working on our own transformation and are looking for a leader to inspire us as we continue. We are seeking a minister who will support our efforts to keep moving towards

a future that is inclusive, Christ-centered and based on “Our Future Story” and “Our Deep Why.” These documents are attached hereto.

- **Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions** We are looking for a person with deep scriptural knowledge to tie the stories and lessons from the Bible to our lives today. We want the Bible to be a living document and we want to be living the lessons there.
- **Caring for All Creation** – Our next minister should be compassionate and interested in healing and caring for ourselves, themselves and our neighbors.



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 be a congregation that leads a life of truth and that treats the church as God’s house manifesting divine glory and grace. To be a congregation that prays together and worships through music, one that is understanding, patient, loving, compassionate, and kind, that enjoys fellowship while not compromising on any differences we may have in thinking or ideas. To be a congregation that is also generous of time and treasures, with board leadership that is in fellowship and communicates in person.

This will make us or lead us to make a covenant together so that we can become a strong, cohesive, and caring family, centered on Christ and his teachings; building each other up at the same time as we reach out to those in need and become a beacon of hope and a center of renewal, while being of service to and a refuge for those in need, and those who are lonely, poor, and hungry.

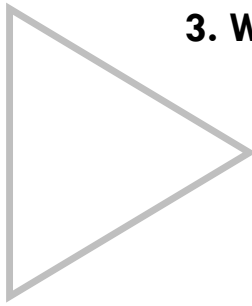
Describe how God is calling you to reach out to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of your community and congregation.

God is calling us to have deeper fellowship one with another, to pray, to grow in faith, and to trust him; he is calling us to be still and quiet so that we can truly hear when he speaks to us through scriptures or sermons that speak to the tragedies in our world today. God is calling us to reach out and address emerging challenges by following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, and focusing on the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the marginalized, on serving children and families and the elderly.

God is calling us to be honest with one another, to be of service to our church family, pray together, and be a resource and a safe space for our neighbors. We are called to be willing to search and offer solutions when listening to the concerns and needs of our church members, and to work hard in being of service to each other. God is calling us to be ignited and transformed by his abundant and infinite energy filled with his love, hope, faith, wisdom and patience.

We have a Transformation Team that has embarked on helping us to transform from a membership model to a discipleship model. Through their work with the congregation, we have “Our Future Story” – a vision of what we could be, a vision of what God is calling us to be.

Recently, the Transformation Team led a short program about Barnabas – learning about who he was and how we can be more like him. Attendees spent time getting to know someone who they didn't know and then sharing with others. Feedback was positive and indicative of the desire to come together as a community. "Our Future Story" (attached hereto) was read as part of the program as a reminder of where we are being called.



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?

The congregation’s life of faith is less vibrant than in the past. Programs, such as Christian Education, Youth Groups, Bible Study, Workshops, and mission opportunities have all decreased in activity. Desire to grow the congregation’s life of faith is strong, but revitalization in our spiritual programs, and creation of community spiritual programs is vital to attract new members and to retain current members.

Our congregation is committed to the life of faith during Sunday worship. Our church is welcoming to different cultures and to different faiths. We are described by newcomers as a warm and supportive congregation.

According to some theologians, there are five stages for the growth of a faith community: 1) evangelizing, 2) settling-in, 3) nurturing, 4) discipling, 5) reproduction. While some of our congregants are in various stages separately, as a congregation, we have much room to improve together in all of these five stages.

The Holy Spirit helps us to stay on the right path which leads us to the Way. The Holy Spirit moves us to be kind, care, and to recognize Christ in each other.

Our music brings the Holy Spirit in our midst. The musicians, the chorus, the concerts, and the creativity of our music director is very present with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is with us during our worship activities: passing the peace we offer each other, singing hymns together; with our sacraments: communion and baptism; fellowship before and after services; with our Sunday School students, etc.

The Holy Spirit is with our congregation for all who serve in whatever capacity they can offer. With our care, we lift each other up spiritually and help/care for one another when we are in need.

The Holy Spirit is with our congregation by blessing us with an abundance of guest ministers during our transition.

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

The church is strong and positive in its commitment to Christian fellowship, and faithful and loving connections in our extraordinarily diverse Queens community. We are an outgoing, friendly church with a recurrent commitment to our Christ centered bond that is realized through prayer and worship. Our excellent music program that offers contemporary praise and traditional celebration is a foundation of our Worship and welcoming community.

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 takes place in our sanctuary with two services. The litany for the 11 AM service is a traditional litany based primarily on the lectionary with the Music Director leading the volunteer choir members. The litany for the 9 AM service is a less traditional format with a Praise Band comprised of the Music Director and volunteer musicians. Some worship services are a combination of these services incorporating musical elements from both services. Since March 22, the church has created one Zoom worship service at 10 AM.

Good preaching at our church is bible-based, passionate, lively, joyful, inspirational, and educational. All good preaching is connective and relational, and provides food for the soul that lasts the entire week. Preaching should be scholarly, meaningful and relevant yet spiritual, offering lessons and insights from scriptures that bring to light the problems of everyday life and reflect God's promises to us.

Sermons should inspire us to serve others and put God's love, hope, and justice into action in our daily lives. Good preaching is Christian-centered and echoes what is going on in our world and fosters social awareness and resonates of social justice while not being political. It is also loving, compassionate, and caring, and should motivate us to be more like Jesus; it should cultivate an intimate personal relationship with God. Sermons can also have humor.

Good preachers have a loving heart and love to tell stories. They should also speak clearly and have the right tone and volume to be understood. One person commented that it should be based on Trinitarian theology.

We have been blessed to have been able to continue our baptism sacrament during our time of transition. Our pulpit supply ministers have been very humble and gracious to have lead our Baptisms. Our deacon chairperson coordinates all efforts between the families and the ministers in preparation for the service, which is always performed during the 11 AM service. The deacon chairperson with two deacons also plan and coordinate a Baptism class with the minister and the family. The class follows the curriculum created from the deacon's manual and incorporates the minister's teachings and questions for the family.

Our most recent Baptism in February 2020, was of the child of a long-term member. She and her husband have relocated to a nearby state, but she retained her full membership and returned for their daughter's baptism. The couple were married at the Church-in-the-Gardens four years ago. Their long term plan is to return to Queens and become actively involved in the church.

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?

An Adult Bible Study weekly gathering was recently re-instituted and is drawing a small group of regular attendees. Lay leadership has used UCC "Weekly Seeds" to guide discussion and is currently using a "Lifeway Biblical Solutions for Life" curriculum on the Books of Acts: 1-12.

The congregation's responses resonated a deep commitment to service within our church and community including the global community, a commitment to an intimate prayer life and regular attendance at Worship. There was also consistent mention of the inspiring music of the church and continuing Christian Education in different contexts.

Conversations with others were mentioned as support of continuing faith formation.

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?

- **When it comes to decision-making, how many hours are spent in meetings per month?**
- **Think of a time when action had to be taken quickly, for example when a crisis or disaster occurred. How was that accomplished?**
- **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 upon request**

There is formal communication with the congregation before the annual meeting when board and committee annual reports are distributed to all members. Less formal communication and updates are conveyed through a monthly newsletter and a formal weekly email. The Church Council meets monthly to update and be aware of what each Board/Committee is working on.

The Boards of Trustees, Deacons and Christian Education meet monthly and the duration of meetings range from 1 – 2 hours each. The board members serve three year terms, with one-

third of each Board's members' terms expiring each spring. There is a Nominating Committee that meets frequently during the early spring to present a slate of officers to the various boards and committees to be announced at the May Annual Meeting. The minister is an important part of the board meetings. Committees meet on a variety of schedules depending on the season and work to be done.

There are ad hoc committees formed as necessary either from the minister or a board expressing a need.

We would like to spend less time in meetings and more time in fellowship and discipleship. There is a desire by some members to revisit our governance structure and by-laws to determine if they still suit our congregation.

In times of immediate crisis or when decisions need to be made quickly, the leadership of the Board of Trustees and/or Board of Deacons come together with the Treasurer, if necessary, to find a solution and communicate using the "robo-call" system, telephone tree, or email system. Members will come together quickly to assist one another.

3b. 11-YEAR REPORT



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

Church#	402330	Schedule#	0	The Church in the Gardens	Queens	NY	1375			
Assoc:	532									
YEAR	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR/ED/ FAITH FORM	CONFIRMATION	CONFESSION	TRANSFER OR RE-AFFIRM	DEATHS OR TRANS OUT	OTHER LOSSES	NET MEMBS ADDS-REMOVED	
2007	275	145	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	
2008	277	145	60	6	8	0	5	33	-24	
2009	269	145	57	0	0	11	3	16	-8	
2010	269	145	57	0	0	0	0	0	0	
2011	250	145	57	0	0	0	0	0	0	
2012	269	145	57	0	0	0	0	0	0	
2013	269	145	57	0	0	0	0	0	0	
2014	269	145	57	0	0	0	0	0	0	
2015	255	104	50	0	0	8	5	17	-14	
2016	255	104	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	
2017	255	104	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	
YEAR	CURRENT EXPENSES	CAPITAL PAYMENTS	BASIC SUPP/ UCC	TOT OTHER GIVING	TOTAL CCWM	OTHER GIFTS	WIDER MISSION	BASIC SUPPL/ CURR LOCAL	TOTAL EXPEND	PLEDGES AND OFFERINGS
2007	\$54,196	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$54,196	\$0
2008	\$62,136	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$16,671	\$9,671	\$0	\$78,006	\$193,128
2009	\$68,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$13,000	\$9,000	\$0	\$90,000	\$186
2010	\$68,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$68,000	\$0
2011	\$68,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$68,000	\$0
2012	\$68,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$68,000	\$0
2013	\$68,000	\$0	\$2,500	\$0	\$2,500	\$0	\$2,500	0.38	\$68,500	\$0
2014	\$68,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$68,000	\$0
2015	\$68,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$68,000	\$0
2016	\$68,000	\$0	\$2,546	\$2,546	\$2,546	\$0	\$2,546	\$0	\$68,546	\$0
2017	\$68,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$68,000	\$0
% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR/ED/ FAITH FORM	TOTAL ADDITIONS	TOTAL REMOVALS	TOTAL CURR LOCAL EXPENSES	TOTAL CCWM	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	TOTAL	TOTAL
2013-2017	-5.20	-28.28	-12.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2007-2017	-7.27	-28.28	-30.67	0.00	0.00	18.75	0.00	18.75	0.00	18.75

Please note: Zero values (000 or 1'907) may reflect missing information in some years. Christian Education/Faith Formation refers to Church School Enrollment for all figures before 2007.

3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	175	No
Number of active non-members:	20	Yes
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	195	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:	85%	Yes
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	6%	Yes
Less than 5 years:	9%	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>
20	12	3	5	10	15	10	10	15	Yes

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	5%	Yes
Households with minors:	1%	Yes
Single adults age 35-65:	24%	Yes
Joint households with no minors:	53%	Yes
Single adults over 65:	17%	Yes

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	7%	Yes
College:	41%	Yes
Graduate School:	49%	Yes
Specialty Training:	3%	Yes
Other (please specify):		

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	57%	Yes
Adults who are retired:	30%	Yes
Adults who are not fully employed:	13%	Yes

Describe the range of occupations of working adults in the congregation: congregants work primarily in business and professional occupations, in the technology sector, with some tradespeople and laborers.

Describe the mix of ethnic heritages in your congregation, and the overall racial make-up. Most UCC congregations tend to describe themselves as “diverse.” Yet, the vast majority of UCC congregations are mono-cultural. What does diversity mean in your context?

We are a congregation of people with various ethnic and social heritages and life experiences. When surveyed, respondents identified as white (72%) , Asian (14%) , Hispanic/Latino (5%) , Black/African American (3%) , Other (6%) .

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

3d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING

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

Ways of Gathering	Estimated number of people involved in attendance	Who plans each of the listed gatherings? <i>(list any and all worship planners, such as various lay leaders, pastors, musicians, other staff)</i>
Adult Groups or Classes	Ad hoc, 30 – 70 attendees 10	Transformation Team Lay led Adult Bible Study
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>	5	Board of Deacons, Minister
Children’s Groups or Classes	Weekly, 9-14 attendees	Board of Christian Education, volunteer teachers
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	100+ at holiday services	Minister, Music Director, Worship & Music Committee
Church-wide Meals	Semi-Annually	Church Council
Choirs and Music Groups	Weekly, 20 volunteers	Music Director, Worship & Music Committee
Church-based Bible Study	Weekly- 10 attendees	Board of Deacons, Board of Christian Education
Communion <i>(served how often?)</i>	Monthly	Minister, Board of Deacons
Community Meals		
Confirmation <i>(number confirmed last year)</i>	2 students confirmed in June 2018, none in 2019	Board of Christian Education
Drama or Dance Program		
Funerals <i>(number last year)</i>	0	Minister, Board of Deacons
Intergenerational Groups	Annually, 30 attendees	Board of Christian Education

Outdoor Worship		
Prayer or Meditation Groups	Weekly, 5-7 attendees	Lay leadership
Public Advocacy Work		
Retreats	3	Transformation Team, All-church
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community		
Weddings (<i>number last year</i>)	0	Wedding Coordinator
Worship (time slot: 9:00 AM)	25	Worship & Music Committee, Minister, Music Director
Worship (time slot: 11:00 AM)	45	Worship & Music Committee, Minister, Music Director
Worship (via Zoom 10:00 AM)	42 sign-ins	Worship & Music Committee, Minister, Music Director
Youth Groups or Classes		
Young Adult Groups or Classes		

Additional comments:

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).

Name	Three- or Four-Way Covenant? (3 or 4 or No)	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired? (Y or N)
None				

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: none

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

Staff Position	Head of Staff?	Compensation (full time, part time, volunteer)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
Office Administrator		Full-time	Pastor or Board of Trustees	10+ years
Music Director		Part-time	Pastor	10+ years
Custodian (Day)		Part-time during COVID-19	Office Administrator	3 year
Custodian (Night)		Hourly, on furlough during COVID-19	Office Administrator	15+ years
Co-Directors of Nursery School		Part-time, on furlough during COVID-19	Board of Trustees	2 years
Sunday School Coordinator		Hourly, on furlough during COVID-19	Board of Christian Education	5 years
Sunday Sexton		Hourly, on furlough during COVID-19	Office Administrator	20+ years
Wedding Coordinator		Paid per event		5 years
Cradle Room (Nursery Care during worship)		Hourly, 2 individuals, on furlough during COVID-19	Board of Christian Education	8 years

REFLECTION

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

Congregational demographic responses indicate a dwindling membership that has limited financial resources to support a staff. There is some confusion about who is the Head of Staff. Some of the congregants believe it is the minister. The Board of Trustees, with the Subcommittee Personnel Committee, has felt it is their responsibility, sometimes leading to confusion and conflict.

This has impacted in the stagnation of the congregation’s overall ministry. We do have volunteers who support the church office and participate in events. We need clear program leadership.

3e. CHURCH FINANCES

Current annual income (dollars used during most recent fiscal year)

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$134,482
Endowment Proceeds (<i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i>)	2.8% minus administrative expenses
Endowment Draw (<i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, “drawing down the principal”</i>)	\$0
Fundraising Events	included above with Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	Memorials \$2,258 Flowers \$3,152 Sunday School \$73 Holidays \$8,154 World Service \$2,509 Deacon’s Fund \$919
Grants	PPP Federal Loan \$68,000, expected to be forgiven
Rentals of Church Building	\$95,043
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$66,000
Support from Related Organizations (<i>e.g. Women’s Group</i>)	Miscellaneous fundraising is included in Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving above
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$63,071 Conti estate to unrestricted endowment
Other (specify): Nursery School income after expenses	\$40,605
Other (specify):UPK income after expenses	broke even
TOTAL	Net income after expenses \$53,922

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

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

**Income and
Expense Summary**

	Actual Income & Expenses 2018 -2019	Approved 2019-2020 Budget	Actual Income & Expenses May 2019-Apr 2020	Draft Budget 2020-2021	Comments
Income					
Offerings	134,709	172,300	134,482	134,300	Pledge \$110K with 85% commitment
Facilities	142,414	171,102	158,785	104,708	Manse full year rental approx \$4k/mo
Special Donations	429,513	20,575	82,969	35,140	Conti gift \$63k, PPP Loan
Nursery and PreK	231,661	347,120	278,395	304,151	2019-2020 80% Enrollment
Community House Reimbursement	28,655	30,000	24,085	28,000	Reimburse 50% for electricity
Endowment	49,633	20,000	50,400	40,000	Anticipate low rate of return
Misc Income	520	0	0	1,920	
Total Income	1,015,794	761,097	735,316	648,219	
Expenses					
Trustee Expenses	160,057	169,532	173,598	154,175	
Deacons	1,508	1,525	1,787	2,625	
BOCE	809	835	447	800	
Nursery Sch & PreK inc. Payroll	185,921	79,580	259,767	208,610	2019-2020 80% Enrollment
Professional Exp & Payroll	219,831	248,470	222,960	227,105	Full time minister as of Feb 2021
Other Expenses	819	800	902	900	
Total Expenses	575,743	548,622	681,394	630,448	
Net Income(Loss)	440,054	212,481	53,922	17,771	

Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support. What is the percentage? Approximately 25%

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

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

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

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered? If calculated as a percentage of operating budget, what is that percentage? *(recommended 10%)* We have participated in Our Church’s Wider Mission with an Easter solicitation.

What is the church’s current indebtedness? The church has no debt obligations.

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.

Currently, we have no building plans underway or in the immediate future.

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

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
	No capital campaigns in last 10 years	\$	\$	

If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe:

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
	No capital campaign underway at this time.	\$	\$	

Does your church have an endowment? Yes

What is the market value of the assets? A restricted endowment is worth approximately \$1.9 million. We recently received an unrestricted endowment (an estate gift) of \$363,000.

Are funds drawn as needed, regularly, or under certain circumstances? Funds can be withdrawn from this restricted endowment under certain limited circumstances such as capital improvements and capital projects.

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

Describe draw on endowment, if any, to meet operating budget expenses for the most recent year and the past five years: There has never been a drawdown of the restricted endowment for operating expenses. Drawdowns from the restricted accounts were made for capital repairs of approximately \$263K for roof and structural repairs to the sanctuary, completed two years ago, and \$30K for the replacement of the boiler in the previous fiscal year.

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

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

Other Assets

Reserves (savings): approximately \$390,000. Some of these cash resources are planned to underwrite expenses in the current operating budget. The PPP federal loan of \$68,000, which is expected to be fully forgivable, is deposited.

Investments (other than endowment): \$28,430 held as committee funds

Does your church have a parsonage? Yes, but it is a rental property in the current fiscal year generating approximately \$66,000/year.

Describe all buildings owned by the church:

The church facility consists of:

The Sanctuary was designed by renowned architect Grosvenor Atterbury and opened its doors in 1915. In 2015, the church was placed on the National Register Of Historic Places by the US Department of the Interior. The church has a working carillon; an organ installed by Allen Organs, NYC; a beautiful c.1914 Steinway custom baby grand piano; and a central air

conditioning system. It seats approximately 250 including the balcony and choir loft. The basement of the sanctuary includes a music rehearsal room, cradle room, 2 bathrooms, storage, kitchen, utility space and a corridor leading to the Parish House. A rear exit from the sanctuary, and a doorway between the Parish House and the sanctuary basement, both lead to the rear of The Community House.

The Community House is adjacent to the church sanctuary. Commonly referred to as the “CH”, it has an auditorium that serves as a gymnasium as well as a theater/public lecture hall with seating for 240, a formal banquet hall with commercial kitchen and a swimming pool with locker rooms, shower facilities and bathrooms. The managing board has pursued an ongoing program to repair, maintain and restore both the interior and exterior of the building. The CH has its own Board of Directors, a separate community membership and a Board of Governors which includes both church leader and ministerial representation.

The Parish House is a two-story structure that stands between the parsonage and the sanctuary and looks virtually the same as it did when it was first completed in 1953. The lower level comprises a large gathering room/church lounge with a working fireplace and adjoining kitchen, a second large room used by both church and community groups, a room presently used as a nursery school classroom, two smaller office spaces and a ladies’ bathroom. The second floor houses the church office, the minister's study/office, several meeting rooms for church, nursery school, and community use, a library and a men's bathroom. Some attic storage space is accessible above the 2nd floor.

Describe non-owned buildings or space used or rented by the church: We do not use or rent other buildings or space.

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs? (*worship space, pulpit, fellowship space, facilities, etc.*) There is an outdoor non-ADA compliant ramp from the sidewalk to the side entrance of the sanctuary.

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?

The annual budget of The Church-in-the-Gardens has been in a pro forma format for many years. There is a monthly review of income and expenditures and an end of Fiscal Year report offered before the Annual Meeting. The contents of the end of year report and the budget for the future year are presented to the membership in an Annual Meeting Q & A session. There have been no recent revisions to this fiscal structure and reporting process.

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.

The most important events over the last 10 years reflect congregational and personal concerns: pastors leaving and not having a permanent pastor since April 2018, the many capital repairs, spending more than we have and the financial difficulties that point to no longer being a congregation of privilege. One member commented on the life changing circumstances of a long-term pastor (death of a wife, remarriage, moving out of the neighborhood), as having a critical impact on role perception and the changing role of a pastor within this congregation. His later departure was also seen as leaving behind upheaval.

The church also entered its second century of existence, proving the durability of its message of God's purpose to our neighborhood, but there is also concern for the many members who have died and there is concern for the lack of unity amongst members.

The tenure of Rev. Moore, albeit short, was a critical event, including his engagement of young families, how much children loved him and enjoyed being with him, his inspiring sermons and projects designed to bring innovation. The recognition of God's calling for the church to be transformed and diving into our "Deep Why" and our future are critical, enabled by the Transformation Team's work and the input from the congregation.

The annual commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday is inspiring and promotes justice, love and hope. Finally, the church holds same sex weddings, participating in the World Service Committee, volunteering at the Christmas party the church holds at the Briarwood Shelter, and just making a difference in the lives of children are important markers for many.

In February 2020, we hosted a Volunteer Fair with over two dozen not-for-profit organizations. Over 200 members of the community attended and found opportunities to serve others. Another recent event, "The Beer-in-the-Gardens" – a fundraiser for the Face-to-Face AIDS organization, impressed a member for its potential as an outreach venue. There was impact made by the recent financial contributions from a former member's estate and the Ridgewood Church.

Seeing the need for guidance from an external, larger organization was also seen as a key factor. Joining the UCC was a critical point for the church.

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

Our minister who served us faithfully for more than 20 years left and we embarked upon a search to find a settled pastor as well as an interim pastor. The length of time from our long-term pastor leaving to having a settled pastor was a long 3 years. The interim pastor helped to create a feeling of constancy and stableness. To have the newly settled pastor leave after two and a half

years created a sense of loss and some conflict. This situation was not managed as well as it could have been.

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.

We recognize that some conflicts are to be expected, and we would hope to have these conflicts addressed in an open and honest way to reconcile the relationship or issue at hand. However, in our recent past, conflict within church leadership has not been handled well or openly, with many of the membership left unaware of the nature of the conflict, and ensuing serious negative consequences.

Serious efforts are being made to improve our communications and interpersonal relationship skills.

We reached out to the UCC for assistance, and they connected us with Rev. Marsha Williams, who held communications seminars first for the church leadership and then for the church at large to help us learn better ways to communicate and to handle conflict more effectively. We are actively attempting to increase transparency of the work of the church leaders to the entire congregation. We pray for the day when we are an active, open, engaged, and harmonious body, working together to serve others with the spirit of the Lord in our hearts guiding us at all times.

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?)

There has been conflict with the departure of our most recent settled pastor. The announcement of his call to another church caught many members off-guard. There was strong sense of mourning over his relocation by some members. His departure was devastating and disruptive. It also led to disagreement among members about how the relationship was handled.

Over the past year, we have sought to improve communication in all directions and respond with accountability. Working directly with UCC, the Board of Deacons sought help and guidance from UCC resources. Rev. Marsha Williams led workshops with smaller groups of church leadership as well as with the wider congregation. We have developed a Leadership Covenant for all church leaders to adhere to concerning interactions with each other, other members and staff.

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

Staff member's name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Rev. Steven Moore	2+ years	Dual (DOC)
Rev. Noel D. Vanek	22 years	Yes
Rev. Steven Berry	8 years	
Rev. Ron Wilson – interim pastor from January 2013 – November 2015	22 months	

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

We have learned that our relationships have room for improvement. At times, we have been disrespectful to our ministers in that we limited their power or devalued their opinions. We have also learned a great deal from our ministers. One was particularly interested in encouraging members to discern their gifts - leading laity workshops. One minister was particularly good at being able to speak and relate to all age groups and demonstrating empathy and compassion for all groups. He inspired us to do and be more than we were. In recent years, the introduction of alternate worship litanies/curriculum lead us to realize that a change in worship style can be a welcome change of pace. Through the use of *Gifts of the Dark Woods*, other books, and other worship series - we learned we could worship differently.

We learned that unresolved conflicts cause significant impact on our spiritual well-being, leading to a dampening of joy, love, and faith; therefore it is in our best interest to work together, with God in charge and the assistance of the pastor(s), to resolve our conflicts. We can learn to be more open, transparent, and kind; to listen more and to talk less; to be able to disagree on a concern but move forward with love and compassion for others; to share our differences openly and to accept the majority decision whether we agree with it or not, understanding that collaboration with kindness makes the most sense over time.

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

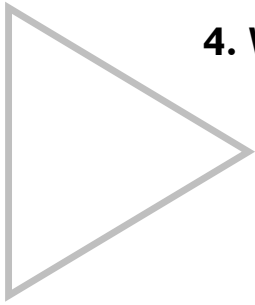
Ask us

Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?

Yes

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

No



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?*

Service and advocacy has been the long tradition of the World Service Committee. Examples are: Blood Drives, food drives for the Queens Interfaith Hunger Network, support for Face-to-Face AIDS, which is a Thai charity that supports children who have been affected or orphaned by AIDS. FLIP (Free Lunch In the Park) is lunch provided to the needy in Tompkins Square Park and it is organized by the 7th Street Baptist Ministry. We have participated in serving meals to the hungry at a local church.

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

We have sent delegates to the UCC New York Conference meetings as well as the Metropolitan Association meetings.

Many local churches love to tell the story of what they are doing in the community to transform lives. Some have identified certain aspects of their witness into the wider community using language shared with other UCC congregations.

Check any statements below that apply to your UCC faith community.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input 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 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 checked="" 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?

Yes! We aspire to fulfill all of these statements of witness!

Describe your congregation's participation in ecumenical and interfaith activities (with other denominations and religious groups, local and regional). We have participated in the Forest Hills Interfaith Thanksgiving services for many years.

The most recent Confirmation Class of students, their families and class leaders attended worship at the Reform Temple of Forest Hills. At another time, the Confirmation Class students and class leaders attended an overnight Inter-spiritual Retreat at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

We participate in Queens Interfaith Hunger Network food pantry by collecting food and financial donations by organizing neighborhood food drives.

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

Our Mission Statement is included at the end of this document. We support individuals in their path with Christ. We realize that we want to do more with regard to service and discipleship.

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?

4b. MISSION InSite

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

Our neighborhood community is growing with families and children under the age of 17. We also expect that the number of seniors in the community will grow over the next 10 years.

How do your congregations' internal demographics compare or contrast to a) the neighborhoods adjacent to your church and b) other neighborhoods with which you church connects?

Our own demographics are reflective of the growing number of seniors in our immediate community. Participation of families with school-aged children in our congregation has dropped off since the permanent minister left. Families with children seem to desire a consistent minister. We are hopeful with the calling of a new pastor, we can again attract and retain families with school-aged children as well as other family configurations.

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

We have not modified our ministry adequately to address the demographics of our community. Given our traditional Sunday morning events, we are competing with other commitments that families have, i.e., sports leagues, birthday parties, extra study time for high school entrance exams, etc.

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

The Church-in-the-Gardens is known as a very welcoming church that offers many different community supports and resources. Many of the residents of Forest Hills have been on the premises for a variety of reasons. The most prominent illustration is that wonderful music is offered not only in our Worship, but by local music groups that rent our sanctuary. The Oratorio Society of Queens, which has a small office on the premises, has a regular season of excellent productions. Music teachers also rent our space for student lessons and recitals.

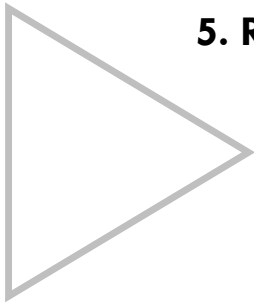
Self-help groups such as AA, Al-Anon, and Nar-Anon meet weekly. Our church-sponsored Boy Scouts and Cubs, Troop 96, have been an exciting part of the community for more than 75 years. Group music, drama and dance is offered on the premises to children in the community. Also, there is a professional counseling center. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) has a weekly co-op distribution center at the church for organic produce, and has a liaison with farms to fill orders of organic eggs, milk, and meat.

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

New members or visitors come to our church in a desire to seek meaning and purpose greater than a personal need and find that the sermons speak to them. They find themselves on a journey towards fulfillment and joy. When they walked in, they feel the warmth of being at home, cozy, and were are impressed by the beauty of the sanctuary. Newcomers make personal connections and are encouraged to become involved beyond Sundays in activities (choir, music, world service committee, concerts) leading to making a commitment to the church, to becoming members and assuming leadership roles.

New people comment on the diversity, friendliness, kindness and warmth of the congregation; that there is a sense of community and a commitment to helping others, and to making the world a better place.

5. REFERENCES



REFERENCE 1

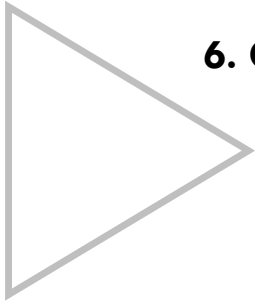
The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson
Minister for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
United Church of Christ National Ministries
Phone: 216-736-2191
Email: thompsonk@ucc.org
See attached reference letter

REFERENCE 2

Karla McKenzie, Executive Director
Parish Resource Center of Long Island West, Inc.
919 Elmont Road
Valley Stream, NY 11580
Phone: 516-285-0919
Email: Karla@cpr4church.org
See attached reference letter

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:

"We Are Called"

[David Haas](#)

1. Come! Live in the light!
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom,
to live in the freedom of the city of God!
Refrain: We are called to act with justice.
We are called to love tenderly.
We are called to serve one another, to walk humbly with God.

2. Come! Open your heart!
Show your mercy to all those in fear!
We are called to be hope for the hopeless,
so all hatred and blindness will be no more!

3. Sing! Sing a new song!
Sing of that great day when all will be one!
God will reign and we'll walk with each other as sisters
and brothers united in love!

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.)*
Pastoral Search Committee with congregational input

Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

Signed:

Cynthia Knauer/ Chair, Pastoral Search Committee/August 14, 2020

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. Dr. Marsha Williams
Name / Title: Associate Conference Minister
Email: revwilliams@uccny.org
Phone: 315-446-3073 x 410
Date: July 1, 2019

**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

Our Future Story - DRAFT
A Vision for the Church-in-the-Gardens in 2025
We Are a Church in Action

The Church-in-the-Gardens has become not only a house of worship, but also the community's lighthouse of sorts—where the faith, love, hope, grace and justice of Jesus Christ are exercised collaboratively to serve the physical and spiritual needs of our neighbors. Over the past five years, CITG has gradually transformed into a dynamic and vibrant “church in action” where each congregant's talents and passions for helping others are discovered and actively cultivated. Church-life extends well beyond the walls of the sanctuary many days of the week.

The Church-in-the-Gardens is seen broadly by the Forest Hills and its surrounding community as a place of renewal and refuge. There are recurring weekly and monthly events that draw parishioners and community members together in service, fellowship, and spiritual growth. For example, on the second Tuesday of every month, there is a vespers music service led by rotating members of the community (both in prayer and in music). Participants are drawn to the service as a way to pause from their daily hustle and bustle, reflect, meditate, pray, and renew. Quite often, a few of the young adults (in their twenties) who participate in the vespers service adjourn to a bar afterwards continuing a discussion of the theme from the service. Participants come from various churches in the community, and also include many with no formal religious affiliation.

The Parish House is abuzz with weekly activity. In addition to the ongoing counseling services and support groups, different community groups frequently request and use rooms at the Parish House to convene their meetings - planning service projects, community action initiatives, and meet-ups. The church has set up an online request form for groups to request the space. The rooms, themselves, have been upgraded with white boards, Wi-Fi, and new chairs/tables that allow for flexible seating arrangements that are also easy to set up and break down. While these community groups are virtual and self-organized (many groups are loose confederations of people and not formal non-profits), they consider CITG their home base. Many congregants of the church are members of these groups. The activities of these groups, along with the sponsored activities of the church are publicized to all group members and congregants, so there is frequent cross-fertilization of participation through the church's online “sign-up” service.

We have developed a team who works with the UCC Disaster Relief to participating in the recovery and rebuilding efforts when and where natural disasters occur. Intergenerational work. mission trips are arranged to assist in long-term recovery efforts extending our hands to those in need.

The youth choir, which was rejuvenated a few years ago, is still thriving and the choir will be embarking on a tour to upstate New York singing in various United Church of Christ congregations. We now have three active youth groups separated by age into three age groups. Each of these groups centering themselves around faith, fellowship, and mission. Energized by their desire to travel and to help others, the high school group routinely goes on yearly mission/work trips rotating between local, national and international locations and trips.

Through committed outreach efforts, CITG has become the best-known “community house”, a place where any person or any group, across all ages, races, religions, and cultures, can come and work together to achieve the collective goal of bettering the community and the wellness of its inhabitants. On roughly a monthly basis, the church hosts community education/discussion forums, lecture series bringing in speakers on topics such as social justice (e.g., confronting racial bias), poetry slams, stress reduction, child raising (e.g., parenting in the age of digital media), financial planning, caring for adult parents, sharing of personal stories (e.g., immigrant stories). These activities and events are skillfully organized and coordinated by volunteers identified from CITG’s pool of gifted and talented congregants as well as volunteers from the larger community.

We’ve changed our structure to allow more ministries to happen organically - so we now have several teams, some short-term and others long-term, which pop-up to address different social justice concerns. For example, a short-term team marches for immigration rights and hands out fliers as part of educating undocumented people about their rights, while a long-term team provides monthly movies with a purpose. We attend a movie at a local theater and then go out for a bite to eat and have discussion. The fellowship is wonderful and we are thinking about beginning a second group. There is also an amazing group of individuals who work with community experts to provide care to our members in need. There are quarterly workshops focusing on specific areas of support and concern for caregivers.

While there is a small group who meet in between services on Sunday for Bible Study, we’ve found that short-term discussion groups work best, many are led by the minister and held at the Manse. These have included: UCC Basics; Climate Change and what we can do; a Bible Study on the Book of James and Isaiah. We alternate between topical subjects and Biblical studies.

As a church community, we have intentionally built our own inclusive mindset: we actively seek to build relationships across lines of differences: age, race, class gender, sexuality, identity and cultural background. We also cultivate an openness mindset: we embrace trying new ideas, we confront our own biases and prejudices, and constantly seek to grow and learn, both as individuals and as a church. Church services themselves provide deep spiritual nourishment and challenge us to grow in our love of God and of each other. There is a palpable sense among church members that we are “actors” in our community (i.e., disciples) and not just an audience. We share the collective belief that all should participate and organize, not just rely on others. Participants often comment on how fulfilling these activities are from both a fellowship perspective and the impact on the greater community.

The gradual transformation of CITG congregants into disciples living a missional life, in conjunction with the community outreach, has generated an awesome ripple effect on the expansion of our outreach beyond the sanctuary walls. In the last five years, CITG has more than doubled its funding to serve the numerous communities across the world in desperate need.

Today, even though our budget is still tight - we are seeing the abundance of God’s love in all we do. We regularly evaluate what we are doing. We let go of things that aren’t working or aren’t clearly part of our mission. We invest in developing leaders by going on a spiritual

leadership retreat event every May at an offsite location where we spend time dwelling in the Word, praying, reflecting and planning.

Visitors to the CITG sense that congregants are thriving in this church. There is an energy and enthusiasm of being here. There is an energy in the church events that spills out into the community and invites others into what is happening at CITG. Our church may be over 100 years old, but we certainly have a new life. We are a church in action.

Our Deep Why

The Church-in-the-Gardens exists as a community of faith, connection and inclusion rooted in the teachings, grace and love of Jesus Christ. We are called to be a beacon of hope and center for renewal in Forest Hills and the larger community. Through spiritual nourishment and harnessing our gifts, we seek to provide opportunities for missional service and pathways to promote social justice and action. We recognize that as members of the body of Christ, we accomplish more together than we can on our own.

Our Mission Statement

The Church-in-the-Church is a Community Congregational Christian Church whose cornerstone is the Lord Jesus Christ. As recipients of God's redeeming love in Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are called to:

- Glorify God
- Bear Witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying action in the world
- Nurture each person in the Christian faith, and
- Affirm the worth and dignity of each individual.

Therefore, we covenant to uphold each person in his or her walk in Christ and to do deeds of faithful ministry in the world. We do all in thankful celebration of the love of Jesus Christ.

Parish Resource Center®

919 Elmont Road, Valley Stream, NY 11580-1049
(516) 285-0919 • Fax (516) 285-2615

August 3, 2020

Pastoral Search Committee
Church-In-The-Gardens
50 Ascan Avenue
Forest Hills, NY 11375

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

Thank you for inviting me to serve as a reference as you search for a pastor to lead your congregation. I invite members of your committee and potential candidates to contact me as follows:

Karla McKenzie, Executive Director
Parish Resource Center of Long Island West Inc.
919 Elmont Road
Valley Stream, NY 11580
Phone: 516-285-0919
Email: Karla@cpr4church.org

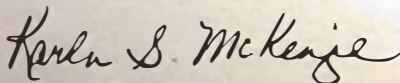
It has been my pleasure to work with clergy and lay leaders at CITG over the past 15 years. During that time, I have found that the congregation has many strengths, and a foundation that should allow it to grow well into the future. One such strength is the lay leadership of the congregation. Over the years, I have served as the congregation's coach as they explored Natural Church Development. I have also led customized leadership training events. In each case, I have found a group of passionate and deeply devoted lay leaders. They have searched the scriptures and their hearts to discern where God might be leading them and the congregation. I believe they are committed to working with new members and a new pastor, and look forward to a bright future at CITG.

During the coaching process, I also found that there was resistance among some in the congregation to some of the changes the Passionate Spirituality Team was hoping to introduce. I believe the kind of resistance that was current at that time could be detrimental to the congregation's ability to move forward. Having said that, I believe that some of the members have become more open to change over the past couple of years, and others have decided to leave the congregation. With this being the case, new leadership will need to manage the change process carefully. It will be important to build consensus and keep the congregation's mission and vision central to the decision making process.

In closing, I believe CITG has a bright future as the members work together with their pastor to bring the love of God to their neighborhood. The congregation has a heart for God and neighbor, and has been blessed by God with many talented and devoted members.

I wish you all the best, and invite you to contact me if I can be of any service as you go through the search process.

In Faithful Service,



Karla S. McKenzie
Executive Director

May 12, 2019

The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson
Minister for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
United Church of Christ National Ministries
216-736-2191
thompsonk@ucc.org
Former staff at The-Church-in-the-Gardens

RE: Reference for The Church-in-the-Gardens

The Church-in-the-Gardens is a strong congregation with a rich history in the Forest Hills community and surrounding neighborhoods in New York City. Over the years, the church has been actively involved in extending its resources in working to address homelessness and poverty. The commitments to justice and peace are quite evident in the ways the church and its members are involved. This commitment to mission and ministry with all of God's people continues to be at its core.

Like many mainline congregations, this congregation has experienced decline. However, this decline has not affected its ability to be of service to the community. The church continues to have two vibrant worship services each Sunday along with focused children's and youth ministries. The 9:00 AM worship service was intentionally started as a contemporary service aimed at families with young children. The service continues to attract a diverse group each Sunday and is a service that can continue to be developed to meet community needs.

Church growth needs attention. As transitions have taken place over the past two Pastors, the church needs a renewed vision for the challenges and opportunities presented by its location nestled in the heart of the Gardens. The legacy that is the witness of generations of individuals who passed through its doors as members, Sunday School participants, Vacation Bible School, Youth Group and the multiplicity of active ministries over the years must give room to ministry in the twenty-first century. Attention to ministry must include outreach beyond Forest Hills in ways that will build on the foundation that is present. This offers opportunity for a new Pastor to provide this leadership as the church moves into its next phase of ministry.

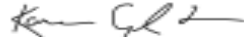
I have 20 years of experience with this church. I started working at the church as a seminarian and served as its Children and Youth Minister. I was later called to serve as its Director for Family Ministries after graduating seminary. My involvement with the church is now at a distance as my father is now an active member of the church, having joined shortly after my departure as a member of the staff.

My most significant experience of The-Church-in-the-Gardens came in 2002 while I was still on staff. That January, my parents had a fire at their home. I watched in awe and gratitude as the church opened its doors to extend care for my parents and for my brother and his family in their time of need. I knew then as I know now that the ethos of the church is such that it lives out a prophetic witness. They extended their help because they cared for me and for my family. I was also keenly aware that they would have done the same for others. My parents, my brother and his family were not members of The-Church-in-the-Gardens nor was membership required to receive of the unconditional love God promises.

My father joined the church, not because I was on staff there, but as he said then, he joined The-Church-in-the-Gardens because what they did was above and beyond what a church should do but was a consistent witness of the love of Jesus Christ.

I pray that the right person will answer the call through this process of mutual discernment. May the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit be evident as this search process moves forward. I look forward to answering any questions.

In Christ's love!



The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson