



# First Congregational

United Church of Christ | Portland, OR

## LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE



MARCH 2020

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# 1. POSITION LISTING

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

## A. LISTING INFORMATION

First Congregational United Church of Christ of Portland Oregon (FCUCC)

Street Address: 1126 SW Park Ave, Portland, OR 97205

Office/Mailing: 1137 SW Broadway, Portland OR 97205

Website: [www.uccportland.org](http://www.uccportland.org)

Additional ecumenical affiliations: None

Conference: Central Pacific, P O Box 22588, Portland OR 97269

Phone: 503-228-3178 Email: [centralpacific@cpcucc.org](mailto:centralpacific@cpcucc.org)

Conference Minister: Rev. Tyler Connoley

Phone: 575-956-3316 Email: [tyler@cpcucc.org](mailto:tyler@cpcucc.org)

### Summary Ministry Description:

First Congregational United Church of Christ continues to offer, and hopes to expand, extravagant hospitality to people who are curious and questioning about progressive Christianity, providing resources to joyfully live out a relational spirituality as members of the beloved community. We are committed to a mutual ministry of collaborative participation in our downtown cultural core, actively exploring together how our members and our building can serve the wider community and act as agents of transforming justice, mercy, and peace. We aspire to be a church that is a-buzz with welcoming activities and community services every day of the week, including visual and performing arts, and is an intentionally inclusive congregation in central Portland. We seek a Senior Minister experienced in urban ministry and skilled in creative leadership with people of the congregation and our metropolitan area. We envision a Senior Minister who communicates openly, insightfully and compassionately, who loves pastoral care, engaging worship, collaborative governance, community outreach and involvement in social justice ministries, and who practices responsible management of human and financial resources.

## What we value about living in our area:

People of FCUCC live in a widespread area called “Portland Metro,” with downtown Portland as the heart and also the hub of the public transportation system. We value the vibrancy of the area with new residents of varying ages and ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds. People of the Portland area appreciate the quality of life, diverse food and beverages, outdoor recreational opportunities, excellent cultural opportunities, and commitment to environmental concerns.

The Church and the congregation recognize the importance of being part of the cultural core, including visual and performing arts (Art Museum, Performing Arts Center), education (Portland State University), historical center (Oregon Historical Society) and downtown mainline churches.

## Current size of membership:

222

## Languages used in ministry (other than English):

Some proficiency in Spanish is a “plus”, especially for involvement with immigrant welcoming. American Sign Language is used for some hymns and choral anthems during worship

## Position Title:

Senior Minister

## Position Duration:

Settled

## Compensation Level:

Full Time

## Does the total support package meet Conference compensation guidelines?

Yes



## B. SCOPE OF WORK

Drafted with reference to the UCC Call Agreement and CPC Clergy Guidelines 40-50 hours weekly

- Formation and vitality of progressive Christianity – by promoting visionary and inclusive opportunities for learning, exploring resources, discussion, prayer, praxis, and respectful engagement with our own UCC faith tradition as well as other local faith communities.
- Preparation and leadership of Sunday worship – including study, preparation of liturgy and sermon, organizing order of worship and announcements, recruiting and guiding lay liturgists, planning seasonally and thematically with music and support staff, curating the spirit and practice of worship, preaching, offering prayers, etc.
- Leadership development – in cooperation with lay leaders and staff, including evaluation, possible improvements, and further implementation of the congregation's core ministries model based on collaboration and communication, transparency and trust, responsibility and renewal.
- Strategic planning for new directions in ministry and mission – by inspiring the church to respond to the challenges and opportunities ahead with confidence, innovation, unity and trust in God's grace and love.
- Recognizable presence in downtown Portland through leadership and direction that engages the congregation in denominational, ecumenical and interfaith ministries of justice and mercy, as well as networking with nearby arts, education, government, religious, and business communities.
- Pastoral care and outreach – to those who are sick, elderly, grieving, homebound and hospitalized, utilizing lay and staff support when appropriate.

### Core Competencies:

- **Experienced** as head of staff ministering within the context of the urban mainline church.
- **Self-confident mature, approachable**, interested in people and open to other viewpoints.
- **Comfortable** with collaborative leadership.

## C. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

### Salary Basis:

Negotiable within Conference Guidelines

### Benefits:

Negotiable within Conference Guidelines

### What is the expected living situation for your next minister?

Living in the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area with a housing allowance

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

Portland and the surrounding area offer a wide variety of residential options. Most church members commute within a range of 30-45 minutes, which would seem advisable for the next minister.

### State any incentives:

\$10,000 budgeted for relocation expenses.

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

Portland area UCC clergy, Portland area UCC clergy women, Portland area interfaith queer clergy, and ministers of downtown churches all have active support groups, as do various clergy professional development, affinity, and interest groups. There are also numerous interfaith organizations focused on social justice education, advocacy, and action, such as Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) and the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (IMiJ). There is an annual Central Pacific Conference clergy retreat. Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA and the Claremont School of Theology in Salem, OR as well as colleges and universities throughout the Northwest offer significant continuing education and advanced degree programs. During the present interim period, First Church has demonstrated a willingness to invest in executive coaching for senior leadership through a very productive consultative relationship with the Center for Progressive Renewal.

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

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

We seek collaborative leadership to grow our congregation, expand our outreach into the community, build our education and faith formation ministries, generate fresh ideas for hospitality and welcoming visitors, invigorate our family and youth programs, and work with us to create durable, flexible governance processes. A key priority for our church is expanding the congregation's participation in ministries and helping lay members to take ownership of this work. We are intrigued by an "I do, we do, you do" model of training, where one leader who has started work in a particular program helps to train others to share ownership and responsibility, so that the congregation can continue programs and ministry work without close ministerial oversight. As part of our transition process we have heard from many people that they yearn for increased opportunities to talk with and get to know one another on a deeper level than typically reached during post-church fellowship hour.

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

We envision a minister who will work with us to reach out beyond our walls to our local arts community, our neighboring downtown churches, targeted immigrants and refugees, the victims of gun violence, and our homeless and hungry neighbors. We are already involved in such ministries through our commitments to Open and Affirming, Immigrant Justice, Portland's homeless population, and other social justice/political issues. Because of our central location in Portland's Cultural District, we are building a vibrant arts gallery and presence, and would like to be a leader among the nearby churches in pooling our resources to have a greater impact than any of us could have on our own. We seek to welcome our diverse neighbors, both in our local area and the wider Portland area, into our doors, whether it be through worship, events, actions, or organizations using our building space during the week.



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

Our congregation is primarily English-speaking, as are most of our neighbors. Since we are active in immigrant welcoming and advocacy and would like to become more so, Spanish language skills could be helpful.

**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 commitment to the core values of the UCC: continuing testimony, extravagant welcome, and changing lives.**

Our next minister will embody the UCC's progressive, forward-looking values of radical acceptance and hospitality and seek to reach out to all people both who walk in our door and who walk past it while grounding our theology and actions in scripture and the example of Jesus Christ. Maintaining and revitalizing hospitality and warmth of worship are extremely important to us in creating a space that is welcoming to all.

- **Practicing self-care and life balance**

Our next minister will have an awareness of their own strengths, needs, and challenges and draw on the support offered by our governance system and ask for additional support as needed. We want to facilitate a relationship where no one person is responsible for everything but rather where our skills and competencies complement one another.

- **Drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression**

Bringing the example of Jesus Christ to life and demonstrating the ongoing relevance of these sacred stories channels energy and vitality to our congregation. This emphasis also appeals greatly to new visitors who may have different faith experiences but see the value of the countercultural message of Jesus. We ground much of our outreach and community engagement in the radical ministry of Jesus.

- **Understanding community context and navigating change with a community**

Our church has gone through much change in recent years, as have many mainline Protestant churches, and our next minister will have the ability to adapt their messages and pastoral style to our needs while reaching beyond our comfort zone and the way we've always done things. We eagerly look forward to embracing new opportunities presented by our local community, and our next minister will work with us to assess the work we can do and how we can all share it together.



## 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?**

We are striving to define what it means for us to be a progressive Christian community and to balance our welcome to people of any and all faith traditions with the enduring guidance we find in Scripture. We seek mutual ministries and collaboration within our church and within our broader community instead of putting all our hopes and expectations on a single leader. We are working to become a community that practices compassionate communication and transparent discussions of our processes, our worship, our concerns, and our values as well as the opportunities for congregants to participate in the life of the church.

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

We are gaining valuable experience in working within a three-year-old governance system that emphasizes communication, collaboration, consultation, and community. We have unanimously declared First Church an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation and have recruited an active ministry team to help implement this goal. Members of our church, working with many other congregations, have assembled thousands of folded-paper “soul boxes” and delivered them to the state legislature in Salem calling for meaningful protections against gun violence. And we have greatly expanded our ArtReach ministry to include not only gallery exhibits but also interpretive classes and meetings with local artists. In addition, we are hearing from our congregation that we need opportunities for long-time parishioners, new members and visitors to engage on a deep, meaningful level. We are called to reach out to our neighboring churches, non-profit organizations, city agencies, and local businesses as we assess community needs and deploy joint resources in the service of social justice, the arts, and families with youth and children. We are seeking new ways of connecting our members who are widely dispersed around the Portland area and beyond, reaching out to visitors and the broader community through re-invigorating our hospitality efforts, seeking opportunities to host events and offer building space, and looking at ways to reach out through technology and social media.



# 3. WHO ARE WE NOW?

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

## A. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS

**Describe your congregation’s life of faith.**

- Fairly progressive, but broad theological perspective.
- Mostly Trinitarian, but with some Unitarian sympathies, a few practicing Buddhists, and several acknowledged agnostics.
- There have been increasing opportunities lately to share faith expressions and questions in small groups or Bible studies.
- Many members don’t know where their fellow worshippers fall in a theological spectrum.
- There are a fair number of people in the congregation who are faith-searching and have only a passing familiarity with scriptures.
- On the other hand, there are approximately 12 or more retired or former clergy in the congregation, adding to the theological diversity and depth of the congregation.

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

- Commitment to the community of faith.
- Diversity of theological perspectives.
- Solid core of retired/former clergy persons.
- Strong interpersonal relationships once established
- Willingness to try new approaches to problems
- Strong social action commitment
- Excellent music program for Sunday worship
- Streamlined organizational process with Core Ministries and Ministry Teams, etc.
- Church building provides outreach to the wider community, including concerts, lectures, art installations/exhibits, meeting space for help groups, etc.



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

- Impressive upstairs sanctuary with historic architectural accents, accessible by elevator.
- Joyful worship in a fairly traditional format with contemporary touches (such as occasional Jazz Services, reading of “Modern Testimony,” and use of silence and a bell to call the congregation to begin the service in meditation/prayer).
- Vibrant and relevant preaching is expected and highly appreciated.
- Solid musical contribution with growing diversity of styles being offered, including the occasional praise hymn; mostly New Century Hymnal with occasional bulletin inserts; growing interest in making more use of the UCC Sing! Prayer and Praise book which the congregation owns. Spectacular organ/piano/choir thematically integrated into the service.
- Members sit in “self-assigned” pews and are dispersed throughout the sanctuary.
- Communion is by intinction from the common cup with the congregation coming forward to receive the elements at the foot of the center aisle.
- Baptisms are not common, but take place by sprinkling at a traditional baptismal font, and depending on the minister, may use the UCC Book of Worship or other resources for the liturgy. Baptisms may be of infants, children, Confirmands, or adults. Recently, some services have featured baptismal renewal liturgies for the whole congregation.
- Minimal-but-improving welcome for guests and newcomers.
- No projection screen for music or worship elements (such as prayers, etc).
- Weekly participation by members as liturgists.
- Newly reactivated Worship Team meets regularly with Minister and Director of Music.

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

- Weekly Godly Play for children on Sundays.
- Bi-monthly youth group for Middle and Senior High youth on Sundays and occasional fellowship and service opportunities outside of Sundays.
- Frequent Adult Faith-Formation opportunities or Arts-related educational programs for adults on Sunday mornings before worship; for example, our ArtReach Gallery Curator, Dr. Sheldon Hurst, often offers a class relating religious themes to the art currently on exhibit in the gallery. Book studies are also sometimes led by retired ministers in the congregation.
- New member classes are offered on Sunday mornings at least quarterly.
- Eve’s Circle Women’s Fellowship occasionally offers educational sessions open to the entire congregation, on topics ranging from prayer to UCC history, theology, polity and practice.
- Confirmation Classes for youth have been traditionally led by an Assistant Minister; going forward are likely to be led by the Senior Minister.



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

- The congregation is organized into three “Core Ministry” areas led by Core Ministry Facilitators that are appointed by the Senior Minister and approved by the Church Council. These Core Ministries are Hospitality (welcomes visitors and the public, connects members), Community (worship, faith-formation, church life) and Peacemaking (advocacy and education for justice and service). The Senior Minister meets with the Facilitators monthly. Core Ministry Facilitators oversee and support ministry teams that function within their respective areas, for example (not an exhaustive list): Sunday Fellowship and the Art Committee (under Hospitality), Potluck in the Park and Immigrant Welcoming (under Peacemaking), and Called to Care, Lay Visitors, Choir, and Worship Team (under Community).
- The Church Council is the governing body of the congregation and meets monthly.
- The Minister’s and Moderators’ Team, consisting of the Minister, Moderator, Past Moderator, and Assistant Moderator, also meet monthly before the Council meeting to create the Council agenda and discuss upcoming business. This team also functions as an ad hoc Personnel Committee.
- A Financial Oversight Team meets monthly before Council to oversee and make recommendations to Council on finances and financial policies.
- Pastoral Relations Committee(s) for the minister (none functioning currently for the Interim Minister).
- Other committees include a Budget Development Committee, a Stewardship Committee, and a Selection Committee that choose candidates for the elected Nominating Committee.
- Budgeted for 2020: a new Director of Faith Formation position (non-ordained), to replace the Assistant Minister who resigned in 2019.



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

Hours spent in decision-making range from 8-12, if one counts only meetings that include lay leaders/committees/teams, to upwards of 22-24 hours if one also includes staff meetings that take place in various configurations throughout the month. (This is based on a four-week month, not a five-week month.)

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

- **Situation:** In mid-2017 the church experienced several instances of Sunday visitors both inside and outside the church building interrupting the worship service with loud comments and lengthy statements that were both disruptive and critical of the church. Several of these visitors moved about the sanctuary in a manner that was unusual and threatening to some in the congregation. Most members felt these actions disrupted the services and wanted to address the situation and prevent escalation of the incidents.

**Action:** In coordination with the senior minister, the moderator and the business manager a Safety Point of Contact Team (SPOCS) was created to develop a strategy to respond in a manner consistent with the church’s covenant to prevent or diminish the impact of future unwelcome intrusions. The SPOCS

plan features: having designated SPOCS members and staff present before, during, and after the service with responsibility for identifying any unwelcome visitors to triage the situation; monitoring closely and being prepared to take preventive measures up to and including expulsion or contacting police; purchase of portable radios for quick communication; communication codes to avoid provoking more disruptive behavior; a custodian at the entrance ready for action; developing and practicing an evacuation plan for those attending the service in case of a need to de-escalate a disruptive situation or in the event of a fire; locking certain doors and closing the balcony during the service; sponsoring a mental health workshop to understand the psychology of disruptive behavior; and having SPOCS members attend an active shooter workshop. The SPOCS updated the pastors weekly and briefed the council and congregation monthly. While occasional disruptive actions have persisted in downtown streets, First Church and other congregations have no longer been targeted as before. SPOCS is currently being revived to assist the congregation in dealing with the emerging Coronavirus crises.



**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

## B. AUGMENTED 11-YEAR REPORT

For a variety of reasons, especially the repeating turnover of ministers and key administrative staff during the past decade, the 11-Year Church Report generated from UCC Yearbook sources includes certain incomplete and questionable statistics. The Augmented 11-Year Report supplements and partially corrects the regular UCC Report, utilizing figures drawn from Portland First Congregational UCC Annual Reports.

Year	Members	Avg Weekly Attendance	Christian Ed/ Faith Formation	Confirmation	Confession	Transfer or Reaffirm	Deaths or Transferred Out	Other Losses	Net Members Add/Removals
2009	351	147	58	0	1	17	8	26	-16
2010	351	146	69	0	0	0	0	0	0
2011	351	146	69	0	0	0	0	0	0
2012	334	139	89	5	0	30	5	23	-17
2013	326	129	49	0	6	4	13	5	-8
2014	334	136	50	0	1	14	4	5	8
2015	273	158	125	0	0	28	11	78	-61
2016	298	142	N/A	0	0	10	7	3	25
2017	297	129	N/A	0	0	5	6	0	-1
2018	287	111	N/A	2	0	0	10	0	-10
2019	222	94	N/A	0	0	14	4	75	-65

Year	Current Expenses	Capital Payments	Basic Support	Total Other UCC Giving	Total OCWM	Other Gifts	Wider Mission	Basic Support % Current Expenses	Total Expenditure	Pledges and Offerings
2009	\$453,551	\$440,554	\$47,799	\$10,145	\$57,944	\$6,495	\$64,439	10.54%	\$958,544	\$259,224
2010	\$499,600	\$0	\$22,155	\$9,015	\$31,170	\$2,700	\$33,870	4.43%	\$533,470	\$223,300
2011	\$499,600	\$0	\$21,395	\$5,138	\$26,533	\$0	\$26,533	4.28%	\$526,133	\$0
2012	\$578,556	\$0	\$22,805	\$9,903	\$32,708	\$11,239	\$43,947	3.94%	\$622,503	\$227,707
2013	\$600,400	\$0	\$21,090	\$7,212	\$28,302	\$4,541	\$32,843	3.51%	\$633,243	\$194,042
2014	\$644,945	\$0	\$21,000	\$7,489	\$28,489	\$4,278	\$32,767	3.26%	\$677,712	\$182,839
2015	\$713,881	\$328,476	\$21,000	\$6,007	\$27,007	\$6,447	\$33,454	2.94%	\$1,075,811	\$200,315
2016	\$746,044	\$0	\$5,183	\$3,549	\$8,732	\$3,290	\$12,022	0.73%	\$744,909	\$214,748
2017	\$689,185	\$0	\$7,419	\$3,030	\$10,449	\$3,254	\$13,703	1.04%	\$663,304	\$198,905
2018	\$712,899	\$0	\$7,390	\$1,060	\$8,450	\$5,867	\$14,317	1.04%	\$728,999	\$180,029
2019	\$653,839	\$0	\$3,108	\$0	\$3,108	\$0	\$3,108	0.48%	\$662,483	\$153,436

% Change	Members	Attendance	Faith Form	Additions	Removals	Expenses	OCWM	Expenditure
2014-2019	-33.53%	-30.88%	N/A	74	203	1.38%	-89.09%	-2.25%
2009-2019	-36.75%	-36.06%	N/A	137	283	44.16%	-94.64%	-30.89%

## C. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

### Describe those who participate in your church:

	Number	Estimate
Number of active members	222	No
Number of active non-members	25	Yes
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above)	247	Yes

### Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

	Percentage	Estimate
More than 10 years	50%	Yes
Less than 10, more than 5 years	18%	Yes
Less than 5 years	32%	Yes

### Number of total participants by age:

0-5	6-18	19-25	26-34	35-50	51-65	56-80	80+	Total	Estimate
7	36	12	15	29	44	85	19	247	Yes

### Percentage of adults in various household types:

	Percentage	Estimate
Single adults under 35	3%	Yes
Households with minors	8%	Yes
Single adults age 35-65	10%	Yes
Joint households with no minors	34%	Yes
Single adults over 65	45%	Yes

### Education level of adult participants by percentage:

	Percentage	Estimate
High School	8%	Yes
Some College	8%	Yes
Graduated College	24%	Yes
Graduate Level	60%	Yes

### Percentage of adults in various employment types:

	Percentage	Estimate
Adults who are employed	35%	Yes
Adults who are retired	50%	Yes
Adults who are not fully employed	15%	Yes

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

Education, Health Care, Non-Profits, Service Industries, Social Work, Technology, White-Collar Professionals.

## Describe the mix of ethnic heritages in your congregation, and the overall racial make-up:

	Percentage	Estimate
White (Non-Hispanic)	95%	Yes
Asian	1%	Yes
Hispanic	1%	Yes
Black or African-American	1%	Yes
Other	2%	Yes

## What does diversity mean in your context?

Portland is recognized as one of the least racially-diverse cities in America, although this is gradually changing. The city is viewed quite favorably today as politically, socially, economically, and culturally liberal, but this identity is a relatively recent development over the last fifty years and is still somewhat aspirational. Historically and traditionally Portland has been far more conservative or reactionary, including harboring lingering racist biases, economic inequalities, and social injustices.

First Congregational United Church of Christ has long played a significant role in the wider community by advocating and acting on behalf of justice issues, social and cultural diversity, and progressive Christian values. These values are acted upon within the work and witness of our church by serious commitments to being an Open and Affirming, Immigrant Justice-seeking, interfaith-participating, creation-caring, extravagantly-welcoming congregation. Nonetheless, the congregation is aware of the limitations in our present diversity, especially our racial and generational diversity, and knows that we must seek effective ways to improve this picture in the future.

## Has your congregation recently had a conversation about welcoming diversity, or do you plan to hold one in the near future?

Diversity has surfaced repeatedly in congregational conversations during the current interim, including a summer 2019 sermon series and all-church discussion on our Church Covenant. In the late summer and fall 2019 the Transition Team also hosted four intimate after-church “listening sessions” and eight after-church small-group “chapel conversations.”

Specifically, on October 27, 2019, as part of the Transition Team’s Chapel Conversations we held a conversation about Welcoming Diversity with a group of interested participants from the congregation after worship. Some of the discussion included:

- We welcome diversity by rejecting a “them and us” mentality and assumptions about other people in the congregation. Instead, our goal is intentional inclusion and reaching out to become more acquainted and appreciate each other.
- We face the challenge of integrating new ideas and reaching out to newer members. We recognize the importance of intergenerational interaction, showing welcome and reaching out to make places for everyone—longtime and new visitors/members.
- We recognize our diversity of opinions, personal spiritualities and diverse backgrounds and politics which require us to engage in ongoing communications.
- A need we recognized: ongoing scheduling of small group discussions to encourage participation and involvement of everyone using a combination of structured and not-so- structured formats--for example, to include youth and children—and a radical welcome.

## D. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING:

Ways of Gathering	Estimated number of people involved in attendance	Who plans each of the listed gatherings?
Adult Groups or Classes	30-40 monthly	ArtReach Curator, Minister, Retired Minister members, Lay leaders, Eve's Circle leaders
Baptisms (number last year)	1	Minister
Children's Groups or Classes	10	Children's Min. Coordinator, Godly Play Teachers, Child Care Provider
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	150 each service	Minister, Pastoral Ministry Associate, Worship Team, and Music Director/Organist
Church-wide Meals	50 weekly (in Fellowship Hall after worship)	Fellowship Coordinator, Hospitality Core Ministry Facilitator
Choirs and Music Groups	Nearly 60 in Sanctuary and Locus Iste Choirs, including instrumentalists and several who gather for ukulele group	Music Director/Organist, Lay Leader (UCC Ukes)
Church-based Bible Study	None at present	
Communion	Approx. 95 each service, served once monthly	Minister, Worship Team and Servers
Community Meals	15 (who serve in community meal programs)	Team members of Potluck in the Park and Transition Projects meals; Peacemaking Core Ministry Facilitator
Confirmation	2	Minister, parents
Drama or Dance Program	None at present	
Funerals	2	Minister, Music Director/Organist
Intergenerational Groups	None at present	
Outdoor Worship	30-40 at Camp Adams	Minister, Lay song leader
Prayer or Meditation Groups	4	Lay leaders
Public Advocacy Work	10	Lay leaders
Retreats	15	Eve's Circle leaders, Minister or Pastoral Ministry Associate
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community	None at present	
Weddings	None	
Worship (10:30 a.m. Sunday)	Ave. 95-100 per week	Minister, Pastoral Ministry Associate, Music Director/Organist, Worship Team
Young Adult Groups or Classes	5	Minister
Youth Groups or Classes	5-10	Volunteer Youth Ministry Associate
Other: Lay Visitation Program "Called to Care"	7	Lay Leaders and Pastoral Ministry Associate

**List all members or regular participants in your congregation who are ordained, licensed, or commissioned ministers.**

Name	Three- or Four-Way Covenant	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired
Frank Baldwin	No	Local Church, Central Pacific Conference	Pulpit supply, CPC Committee on Ministry	Yes
William Cunitz	No	Local Church, Central Pacific Conference, UCC Pension Board	Pulpit supply, CPC Treasurer, UCCPB Annuitant Visitor	Yes
Denise Denniston	Four-Way	Hospital	Chaplain	No
Pam Fine	No			Yes
Lindsay Fulmer	No			Yes
William Greene	No			Yes
Grant Helbley	No	Ordination Pending Call	Member-in-Discernment, Pulpit Supply	No
Simon Ho	No	Hospital	Chaplain	No
Sheldon Hurst	No	Local Church	Volunteer ArtReach Gallery Curator and Adult Educator	Yes
Lawrence Long	No			Yes
Kris Moore	No	Theologically trained but not yet ordained, Non-profits, Interim ministry, Local church	Administrator, Pastor	No
Phillip Oliver	No	Treatment Center	PT Group counselor	Yes
Phil Owen	No	Local Church		Yes
Patricia Ross	No	Former Sr. Pastor	Minister Emerita	Yes
Bruce Swanson	No	Central Pacific Conference	CPC Ongoing Peer Support Team, Pulpit supply	Yes
Gary Vaughan	No			Yes
Avena Ward	No	Local Church, UCC Pension Board	UCCPB Annuitant Visitor, Spiritual Director, PT Pastoral Ministry Associate	Yes

**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:**

No previous pastors currently hold membership in the church, although Patricia Ross is recognized as Minister Emerita. At least eleven retired ministers are active in the church in a variety of ways as choristers, liturgists, guest preachers, ministry team and council members, ushers, faith formation teachers, art gallery curators, pastoral care and youth ministry associates, and general volunteers.

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	Supervised by	Length of Tenure
Janet Parker, Interim Sr. Minister	Yes	Full time	Congregation Church Council	2 years
Cara Rothe, Business Manager	Yes (Admin. and Building Staff)	Full time	Pastor	7 years
Steve Eggers, Facilities Manager	No	Full time	Business Manager	3 years
Andre Cordes Communications & Accounting Coord.	No	Full time	Business Manager	2 years
Grant Edwards, Music Dir./Organist	No	Part time	Pastor	12 years (one year in current position)
Avena Ward, Past. Min. Assoc.	No	Part time	Pastor	1 year
Maureen Gullett, Comm. Asst.	No	Part time	Bus. Manager	4 years
Joseph Pettit, Choir Section Leader	No	Part time	Music Director	2 years
Sheryl Woods, Ch. Section Leader	No	Part time	Music Director	3 years
Elizabeth Winship, Ch. Section Leader	No	Part time	Music Director	2 years
Adrian Rosales, Ch. Section Leader	No	Part time	Music Director	3 years
Mary Sutton, Accompanist	No	Part time	Music Director	1 year
New Position, Dir. of Faith Formation	Yes	Part time	Pastor	N/A
Jessie Tarter, Children's Min.	No	Part time	Pastor, Dir. of Faith Formation	1 year
Maria Felix-Pedro, Child Care Provider	No	Part time	Dir. of Faith Formation	1 year
Monique Cordes, Nursery Attendant	No	Part time	Dir. of Faith Formation	1 year
Mpagi Kirumira, Event Assistant	No	Part time	Bus. Manager, Facilities Mgr.	4 years
Christopher Carey, Event Assistant	No	Part time	Bus. Manager, Facilities Mgr.	3 years
Marcus Lee, Event Assistant	No	Part time	Bus. Manager, Facilities Mgr.	1 year
Alicia Teller, Event Assistant	No	Part time	Bus. Manager, Facilities Mgr.	1 year
Emily O'Gara, Custodian	No	Part time	Bus. Manager, Facilities Mgr.	3 years

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

These participation and staffing summaries of Portland First reflect the pastoral and administrative needs of a resourceful and resilient downtown mainline church, the operational and maintenance requirements of a historic landmark building, and the evolving mission aspirations of a challenged, changing and committed congregation. Also indicated here are the presence of a focused and efficient church staff, an amazing cadre of lay leaders, and a remarkable cohort of retired but highly supportive clergy. Also notable are the significant resources the church provides to its core ministries of worship, music and the arts, pastoral care, faith formation, community life, and social justice.

## **E. CHURCH FINANCES**

Please see Appendix A for the 2020 Church Budget, adopted by the Annual Meeting of First Congregational UCC Portland, December 15, 2019.

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

The annual income for the 2020 budget is:	Ordinary income	\$716,515
	Other income	\$81,906
	<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$798,421</b>

The annual expenses for the 2020 budget are:	<b>Total expense</b>	<b>\$798,420</b>
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**Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support. What is the percentage?**

Of the total budgeted expenses \$210,487 or 26.4% are for ministerial support. This total is comprised of \$155,269 for ministerial, \$54,418 for Director of Faith Formation, and \$800 for substitute pastors.

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

The church has never failed to pay its financial obligations.

**Is your church 5-for-5?**

Our church is 5 for 5 in contributing to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and special UCC offerings.

**In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered?**

OCWM is part of the 2020 budget with a total of \$9,299 (1.16%), which is paid quarterly.

**What is the church's current indebtedness?**

The church has no current indebtedness.

**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.**

No building program is underway or projected.

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

The only capital campaign (\$250,000) in the last 10 years was for restoration of the bell tower, which was successfully completed.

**Does your church have an endowment?**

The church has an endowment of \$199,363. These funds are drawn according to the terms of the endowment, which are categorized as Council restricted, temporarily restricted, and permanently restricted. In addition to the endowment funds the church has unrestricted investment reserves of \$1,055,602 for total reserve investments of \$1,254,966.

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

Unrestricted funds are usually earmarked (spent) for special projects and cyclical needs. At the end of each budget year any earmarked funds listed in the budget and not spent can be transferred to reserves based on financial conditions.

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

The draw on reserves for 2019 was \$60,287 or 5% of reserves based on current market value. In 2014 the draw was \$70,000 or 5.7% of the reserve \$1,232,908 market value.

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

The draw on the reserve funds to meet operating expenses has mostly been limited to paying the cost of a special project or event and not for ongoing operations. Examples are: major expense repairs for the building and investing to improve a program to attract members. In 2019 a total draw of \$125,037 was budgeted and only \$60,287 was used and the unspent funds remained in reserves.

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

At the current reserve draw rate of about \$60,000 and not considering market return, it would take 20 years to total \$1.2 million.

**Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:**

The church staff, Treasurer, and Council has focused on improving financial records for several years including a full audit two years ago. We are confident of the accuracy of the calculations that resulted in the above figures.

**Other Assets:**

Other assets (reserves and investments) are described above.

**Does your church have a parsonage?**

The church has no parsonage.

**Describe all buildings owned by the church:**

The only building owned by the church is the historic (1895) church and the surrounding three-quarters of a city block in the downtown Portland Arts District.



### **Describe non-owned buildings or space used or rented by the church:**

Office space is rented from the adjoining Portland Metro facility as part of the 100-year lease with Portland Metro. This space is called the “Church Annex” with frontage at 1137 SW Broadway and access from the church basement. The Annex includes business offices, a conference room, and unutilized offices are rented.

### **Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs?**

All spaces are wheelchair accessible except for the sanctuary balcony.

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

The church has experienced financial ups and downs over its 169-year history in Portland, Oregon. The church has always lived within its financial resources even if at times it has used savings/investments to get through difficult financial times. The church has always paid its bills, debts and has no existing debt.

### **When considering the church’s historical financial priorities to date, we rank them as follows.**

1. Hire and retain well-qualified and committed pastors and staff.
2. Support the church’s mission and programs within our congregational community.
3. Build, maintain, and improve the church’s unique buildings and interior spaces.
4. Support the church’s wider mission within our local community, wider settings of the UCC, and then state, national, international community.
5. Use financial resources when available or gifted to invest and save for financial and church stability.

Even after several years of declining pledges, which were addressed with budget reductions, partial use of reserves, and offset with good investment as well as rental and lease returns, the church has a current cash/security reserve of \$1.25 million. In addition, the church owns a historic church building along with three-quarters of the city block at the site in the heart of Portland’s cultural district facing the park blocks. The primary financial challenge is to increase annual pledges to reduce reliance on investment resources.

## **F. 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.**

After the 1851 founding by ten pioneer members of the First Congregational Church in what was then the muddy wilderness of Portland, Oregon, probably the event of greatest and most enduring significance was the construction and dedication of the historic – and still present – building in 1891-1895. The structure was ambitiously designed in the grand Venetian Gothic style with three corner towers and a central spire. For sixty years the highest of the towers, at 175 feet, was the tallest building in Portland and is still a central city landmark. The two lower towers, along with the central spire, were removed seventy years ago due to structural deterioration, the ravages of weather, and the relentless invasion of pigeons. This iconic downtown building has always supplied the setting and scope of the congregation’s ministry and mission. It has been not only an eloquent house of worship, but also a center for fellowship and faith formation, a home for music and the arts, a regional cultural center, a mobilizing station for community service and social justice action, and an architectural statement of Christian presence and conscience in the midst of the city.

A related sequence of events with lasting effect was the construction, in the early 1980s, of a large-scale public performing arts facility on two quarter-block properties owned by the church and located immediately to the north and east of the sanctuary. Under terms of a 99-year lease, the performing arts center generates continuing revenue for the church's ministries and provides contemporary office and parking spaces as well as necessary funding for building renovations and improvements. The church's current rediscovery of its own exceptional musical and artistic resources is making a noteworthy contribution to the wider community. With adjacent theaters and concert halls, the Oregon Historical Society and the Portland Art Museum across the street, and Portland State University just a few blocks to the south, First Congregational UCC is a contributing partner in an exciting metropolitan cultural center.

The most important aspect of this past decade has been the near-constant arrival and departure of our clergy. Between 2008 and 2018 the members of First Congregational UCC have had ten different senior, associate, assistant, and interim ministers: an average of one per year. Each of these were caring, well-qualified, competent, trustworthy, pastoral leaders. They came and went for a variety of reasons, but their serial departures have left in their wake feelings of confusion, grief, loss, inadequacy, anger, and guilt. Membership and financial support have both dropped precipitously. During this present interim, the congregation has worked hard to acknowledge, understand, and minister to these emotions, in order that healing, redemption, reconciliation, and a different kind of future will be possible. The gifts of these past ten years of loss and transition have included resilience, humility, a growing spirit of grace and unity in our life together, and a new depth of gratitude for all the good that remains and is still possible, thanks be to God.



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

During the previous interim ministry at First Congregational UCC, 2013-2014, there was a particularly productive effort to re-envision and restructure the governance and work of the church. This effort built upon revealing self-studies and outside consultations undertaken by the church over the previous five years. The outcomes have been a new governance model and revised bylaws adopted by the congregation in 2015. This new system envisions moving from a "management and maintenance-driven" governance approach to a "vision and ministry-driven" approach. Accordingly, multiple committees have been recast as ministry teams, clustered and coordinated under three "core ministries:" Community, Hospitality, and Peacemaking. The Church Council is now a smaller, nimbler, policy-making and planning body focused on visions, goals, strategies, outcomes, and general oversight of ministry and mission. Administration, management and program development reside with the ministers and the church staff. Systemic values of communication, collaboration, consultation, transparency, inclusion, access, involvement, community, and outreach, were strongly emphasized.

Being a major change in operating structure and style, it has always been envisioned that implementation, testing, and further modification of the new governance system will take several years. This process has proceeded unevenly but steadily through all the recent transitions in ministerial and lay leadership. It remains a work in progress, but the "vision and ministry-driven model" continues to demonstrate its promise and potential for First Congregational UCC.

*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.**

First Congregational aspires to foster values of inclusive decision-making, transparency and honest dialogue, both in our governance practices and general interaction among members and staff. In truth, however, the aspirational values of the church around inclusion and transparency, listening and caring have not always aligned with the church's actual practices involving conflict. Until very recently, our congregation has also displayed some conflict avoidance behaviors that led to miscommunication and lack of trust among some members. Listening to those who have been active over the past few decades, even during the last five years, evidence of this behavior seems to have involved contentious staff dismissals/departures that were too often clouded in relative secrecy. Congregational leaders have committed to create opportunities for the congregation to manage conflict more constructively, for example, working to develop a behavioral covenant and holding workshops on compassionate communication.

## **An example of more recent conflict...and learning from it.**

The resignation of the most recent senior pastor generated some conflict among the members as it was assumed that unresolved staff issues and disappointment around shared ministry objectives were to blame. People felt guilty, sad and even angry that the circumstances of his departure were not discussed openly or reviewed more broadly. People were left to assume fault or place blame unnecessarily.

Looking back, we now see that we could have encouraged the Senior Minister to seek out more support to help address brewing concerns, through the Pastoral Relations Committee or other means. The Council plans to create a new Pastoral Relations Committee to work with the incoming Senior Minister and to be proactive in creating open channels of communication between pastoral and lay leaders.

The recent decision to hasten the retirement of the Choir Director and the open dialogue about the process led to an effective transition for both the staff member and the congregation. As a result, we celebrated that partnership and shared accomplishments with gratitude. The present period of interim ministry is providing opportunities to envision and experience a church culture more truly given to relationships of grace, inclusion, openness, listening and caring; training in healthy conflict and communication is definitely included in this vision

## **Ministerial History (ministerial staff & years of service for the past 30 years):**

All ministers during the past 30 years have had UCC standing.

John Rogers served as senior pastor from 1987 to 1994. His term began with the Church experiencing declining membership, falling to 462, and a related financial shortfall. As he addressed these issues the City of Portland decided it would be best financially for the City to own the two lots it was leasing from the Church. The Church was adamant that it retain ownership and the City initiated condemnation proceedings. Rogers publicly challenged the City and with support of other downtown pastors and good legal counsel, he and the Church prevailed. By 1993 membership had increased to 520. Rogers retired in 1994.

Patricia Ross became the first woman senior minister and began her term in 1996. That year the Church celebrated the 100th anniversary of the landmark building and its location on the Park Blocks. The Church thrived under her ministry. Ross retired in 2008. At the time of her retirement, the Church had a full-time associate minister, and a decision was made to eliminate the associate position. The incumbent associate was an unsuccessful applicant for the senior minister position and left for another ministerial position in Portland. What didn't leave were lingering hard feelings by him and some of his supporters in the First Church congregation.

Anton DeWet served as senior minister from 2009 to 2013. He created and filled an assistant minister position with Trudy Bradley who tragically was killed in an accident. Sara Rosenau next filled the assistant

minister position and continued during the transition and hiring of the next senior minister. DeWet unexpectedly accepted another call in California for a variety of personal reasons in the spring of 2013. His departure left the congregation with many questions.

Michael Ellick was the senior minister from fall 2014 to July 2018 when he accepted a position with Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. Ellick finalized the major reorganization of the governance structure that continues to present. Rosenau accepted a solo minister position at Portland's Waverly Heights UCC. About a year after Rosenau left Ellick created a new assistant minister position and filled it with Elizabeth Durant. Membership development and declining revenue were major issues during his term. Ellick's departure and the departure of the assistant minister in February 2019 again left many in the congregation with questions.

Janet Parker has been the interim minister from September 2018 to date. Parker has served the church well and the congregation is now focused on future challenges and not past conflict.



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

As stated earlier, we agree about the importance of an active Pastoral Relations Committee and the need to more effectively communicate appropriate issues or decisions among the church leadership and the congregation in general. A shared understanding of goals, performance objectives and a strategic vision for the ministry of the congregation and minister is vital. To that extent, a call agreement and some sort of job description, reviewed at least annually, is critically important to make sure we have clarity about achieving goals.

We also recognize the importance of truth telling and disclosure of the circumstances in which we share ministry with those who will provide leadership. We would rather paint an accurate picture of this congregation, imperfections and all, than gloss over issues and have them come back to haunt or disappoint us later.

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

No

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

No

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

No

# 4. WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

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

## A. COMMUNITY VISION

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

Through our Peacemaking Core Ministry, First Congregational has participated in service activities and made contributions that reflect our intention to live the example of Jesus Christ. In 2019 one of our key efforts was supporting immigrant justice. In early 2019 we passed a formal resolution declaring FCUCC an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation, partnering with the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (IMIrJ) and allotting space in our budget to pursue immigrant welcoming activities. We have supported IMIrJ in campaigns to support drivers licenses for all and to urge the Oregon Supreme Court to limit ICE activity in Oregon Courthouses; co-sponsored with local UCC churches and other immigrant rights organizations programs aimed at both immigrant advocates and immigrants in need of support including an Immigrant Welcoming Workshop, a Know Your Rights Workshop, a Refugee Sponsorship workshop. We hosted an art exhibit featuring Oregon DACA recipients, and members have attended vigils, rallies, lectures, and other community meetings to learn about and support immigrant justice.

We have also been active in the Soul Box Project commemorating the victims of gun violence and displaying in a meaningful way the numbers of people killed by gunfire. Members and friends of the congregation folded over 7,000 Soul Boxes in 2019, each one signifying a victim of gun violence. In February members marched in a Soul Box procession in Salem, Oregon, carrying 36,000 Soul Boxes into the Capitol Building, and the Soul Boxes are used in large-scale displays. The ultimate goal of the project is the display 200,000 Soul Boxes on the Washington DC mall in October 2020.

We have also continued our participation in ongoing service activities and fundraising campaigns including serving our homeless and hungry neighbors through the Transition Project and Potluck in the Park and raising funds through our Spare Change collection program for local-nonprofit organizations including Sisters of the Road, Portland Literacy Council, Sexual Abuse Resource Center and People’s Committee for Human Rights. We’ve had speakers from some of these organizations come to teach us more about their mission and let us know the difference we’re making.

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

Members of First Congregational continue to engage in the wider UCC in a variety of ways. Locally, First Congregational has participated in retreats, outdoor events and other meetings at Central Pacific Conference Camp Adams, our local nature retreat and outdoor ministry facility. We have co-sponsored and attended regional UCC events including immigrant justice workshops. FCUCC youth participated in a Western Regional Youth Event in Hawai’i, and several members attend the Central Pacific Conference of the UCC Annual Gatherings. Our members regularly serve on conference committees and in officer roles. Ministers and members, including members in discernment, have attended the UCC General Synod.

**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. List any statements below that apply to your UCC faith community.** (Find more information as desired at [ucc.org](http://ucc.org).)

Accessible to All (A2A)

God Is Still Speaking (GISS)

Border and Immigrant Justice

Open and Affirming (ONA)

Other UCC designations: 5 for 5 special offerings

**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?**

GISS is an important component of our worship and welcome and informs the way in which we welcome visitors and participate in the life of the broader community. We continue to consider what it means to be a progressive Christian community and how to balance radical hospitality and welcome with preserving our Christian identity. In 2019 we made major strides in supporting Border and Immigrant Justice, and we will continue to seek new ways to advocate for immigrant justice in our community and across the country. Our welcome toward LGBTQ+ visitors, members and neighbors has been a key part of our identity since our congregation adopted the Open and Affirming resolution in 1992 and continues to inform the way we worship, the language we use, the emphasis we place on seeking diversity in all aspects of our church and community, and our participation in community events such as marching in the Portland Pride Parade.

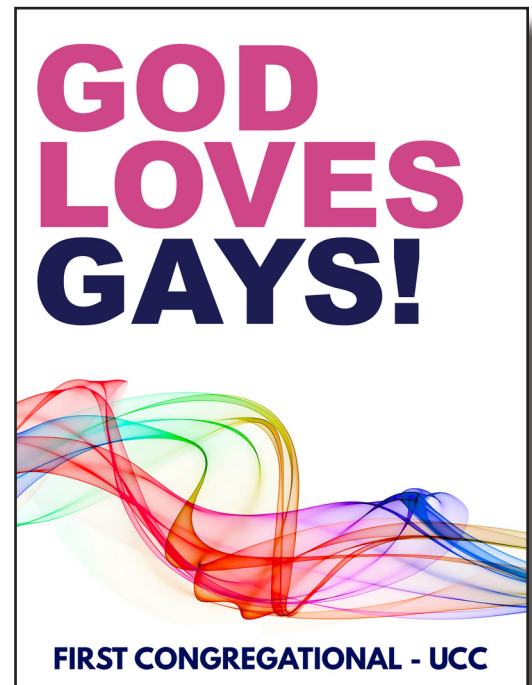
We have done a great deal of work toward making our 125-year old building more welcoming and accessible for neurodiverse members and visitors: installing elevators, ramps, an efficient sound system, etc., as well as providing signing of anthems sung during worship. We also feel there is more we can do to improve accessibility into and within our building with more directional signage, better lighting, and modifications to our restrooms.

We are also exploring avenues for supporting Creation Justice.

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

Our congregation's participation in the community extends to several ecumenical and interfaith activities with religious groups beyond the UCC. Our arts program, ArtReach, regularly speaks to themes of social justice, radical hospitality and interfaith understanding. We are working with seven other local churches to put on "Footprints: Immigration/Migration," a coordinated show featuring art in seven local churches. We also coordinate with other downtown churches to offer a series of midweek worship services during Lent.

We belong to Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, and members have attended rallies and other events hosted by EMO and other local organizations striving for interfaith solutions to social justice issues.



In 2019 we greatly increased our participation in immigrant justice initiatives with interfaith immigrant justice organization IMIrJ, including passing an Immigrant Welcoming resolution, attending citywide educational and advocacy events, and co-hosting a variety of workshops.

Some of our young adult members participate in a monthly interfaith discussion group, Spirituality on Tap, co-hosted with St. Andrew Lutheran Church and open to young(er) adults of all and no particular spiritual background.

**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.**

The Church's Vision Statement adopted in 2009 (sometimes referred to as the Covenant or Mission Statement) reads as follows:

*We are a progressive Christian community embracing diversity of thought, belief and action. In our worship and in our lives, we believe that God is still speaking, and that the risen Christ lives in and among us. We covenant together to:*

- *Create a sacred space that is accessible and welcoming to everyone;*
- *Work for justice in our community and in our world;*
- *Express, in our living, a care for creation and a stewardship of all God's resources;*
- *Nurture our relationships with one another through our listening and our caring;*
- *Grow in faith, learning and service.*

The congregation is estimated to spend about one-third of its time in activities relating to governance, planning or oversight of activities, and the other two-thirds of its time in worship, faith formation activities, music groups, fellowship groups, community service and advocacy. Though the commitments expressed above are not listed in order of priority, for the sake of this exercise, they are considered below in the order they are listed from top to bottom, as commitments 1-5.



Relative to the Church's covenant commitments above, the congregation spends the most time in commitments 1, 4, and 5 (worship, fellowship, spiritual care, faith formation, and community service), less time in 2 (advocacy, though that is increasing with the Church's new Immigrant Welcoming commitment), and the least time in 3 (caring for creation). However, when you include stewardship of finances and property, the church spends a substantial amount of time on commitment 3.

**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?**

The scope of work assigned to the Senior Minister is currently in flux. Since the arrival of the Interim Senior Minister in 2018, the Assistant Pastor resigned leaving the Senior Minister to pick up oversight of her areas of responsibility, including youth, children, and family ministries in particular. Typically, the Senior Minister has been primarily responsible for worship, governance (with lay leaders), financial matters, personnel (staff

oversight), pastoral care (with the Assistant Minister or more recently, the part-time Pastoral Ministry Associate), and community outreach, ecumenical and Interfaith work and advocacy/community organizing. The congregation plans to hire a Director of Faith Formation to resume oversight of children, youth and family ministries as well as adult spiritual formation and, ideally, community-building/fellowship ministries. The two most recent settled pastors were heavily engaged in community ministry/ministry beyond the local church (or desired to be), and that was somewhat controversial. In the most recent case, many members felt that the Senior Minister was spending too much time outside the congregation and not enough time nurturing the congregation. The Interim Senior Minister has intentionally shifted the balance in the other direction, but a healthy balance of internally oriented congregational ministry, and missionally-oriented community/wider church ministry will be an important goal for the next settled Senior Minister, and this should be thoughtfully discussed with congregational leaders to achieve greater transparency and consensus than was the case with the two previous settled Senior Ministers.

## B. MISSION INSITE

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

Early in 2019, First Congregational UCC contracted with the UCC-affiliated Center for Progressive Renewal (CPR) for consulting services relating to the church's interim ministry including our preparations for an effective search and call process. The Transition Team, the Church Council, the Interim Minister, and the congregation have all benefited from research and guidance provided by CPR's CEO, the Rev. Cameron Trimble. Through CPR, we have accessed an enhanced Mission InSite summary known as a FullInsite Report, which we have found to offer a superior focus on the demographics of our congregation and community. The commentary that follows relies on this 2018 FullInsite Report.

First Church's congregation is drawn mostly from Portland adjacent downtown and elite hillside neighborhoods on the west side of the Willamette River, as well as from four long-established residential neighborhoods on the east side of the River. The population of this study area is growing moderately, adding nearly 27,000 new residents over the past 18 years. The average age of the population in our area is 39.23 years old, and will increase to 41.38 over the next decade. Nearly 60% of our neighbors are Millennial or Generation X, and by 2028, close to 85% will be Gen X or younger. Our church is significantly older than our study area. The community seems to be adding school age children, while the number of preschool children and young adults is declining.

Racially, our neighborhoods are 78% white, 5% black or African-American, 6% Asian, 6% Hispanic or Latino, and 5% other. The congregation is much less diverse than the neighborhood. As of 2018, 41% in the study area report being married, 41% report being not married, and 18% are either divorced, separated, or widowed. They are highly educated, with about 93% have at least some college education, and 25% having a graduate or professional degree. Average household income is \$93,689, which is much higher than the state average for household income. Almost 76% are employed in white collar professions, which is higher than the state average. Less than 6% of families in our study area are below the poverty level.

The predominant characteristics of people in our area can be categorized in what MissionInsite calls Mosaic Segments. The most common Mosaic Segments in our area are these:

- Young, City Solos and Singles and Starters (net 49%), younger and middle-aged singles, and some starter families, living active and energetic lifestyles in metropolitan areas.
- Thriving Boomers and Booming with Confidence (net 38%), upper-middle class baby boomer-age couples living comfortable lifestyles settled in town and exurban homes.
- Power Elite (8%), the wealthiest households in the US, living in the most exclusive neighborhoods, and enjoying all that life has to offer.

- Golden Age Guardians (5%), retirees living in settled residences and communities.

In analyzing this demographic data, the Center for Progressive Renewal observes: “First Congregational UCC Portland might not be perfectly positioned to attract any of these groups as church members... The interesting thing is that when assessing the neighborhoods where your members live, we see the same mosaic segments standing out as the largest, with the exception of the Power Elite and the Golden Age Guardians. So, assuming God is working through First UCC Portland exactly where you are right now geographically, in the exact community that you inhabit physically, what would it look like to reach out to these segments by responding to their very real needs, with no agenda as to eventual church membership?”

“When we look at their values, concerns and preferences for ministries, we see that they place particular importance on opportunities for volunteering in the community, involvement in social causes, adult social activities, and family-oriented activities. Their biggest concerns are finances, reaching their goals, fear of the future, and losing weight. The only religious, social or moral value for which they have very strong agreement is ‘I believe tolerance is necessary for social peace and wellbeing.’ They also believe somewhat strongly that:

- Our society must give more attention to accomplishing economic justice.
- We must be good stewards of the environment even if it means restricting natural resource development [such as clear-cut logging, depleting fisheries, drilling for oil, fracking, etc.].
- Humans are affecting the climate of the planet [i.e., global warming].
- Greater emphasis must be given to embracing our ethnic diversity.
- We need to promote sensible gun laws to reduce gun violence.

“They share so many values with First UCC Portland. While in past years your congregation was able to attract people due to loyalty to your denomination, these days almost half the people in your area identify as “Nones” (45%) or Spiritual/No Religious Preference (3%) and only 0.7% identify as Congregational. In [the future] it will be your shared values of tolerance and social justice that will allow you to connect meaningfully with your neighbors. The ways in which you connect can be discerned from the data above about their lives, but should primarily come from simply listening and getting to know these young singles in your area. Regardless of what future encounters hold this act of listening will connect you to your community in miraculous ways.”

*From Assessment Report for First Congregational UCC Portland, OR, Center for Progressive Renewal, Atlanta, GA, June 7, 2019*

### **How do your congregation’s internal demographics compare or contrast to a) the neighborhoods adjacent to your church, and b) other neighborhoods with which your church connects?**

The FullInsite data is drawn from the same neighborhoods that most of the congregation comes from, but the church’s internal demographics are not very closely aligned with those in the study area. As noted above, the congregation is significantly older than our neighborhoods, and also less diverse. The church’s level of educational attainment is higher than the study area; the household income level is about equal. It is also true that 10% or more of our members are taking over 30 minutes to travel to the church, presumably from outlying neighborhoods or suburban communities. The demographic characteristics of these more-distant members may not be noticeably different from the rest of the congregation.

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

The ministry and mission of First Congregational UCC is definitely evolving, although perhaps not as rapidly as the demographics of the community are evolving. The church’s central location, appealing facilities, inspiring worship, commitment to music and the arts, extravagant welcome, progressive culture, and engagement with issues of social justice are assets in appealing to our community. So too, are the many shared values, as noted in the Center for Progressive Renewal’s congregational assessment.

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

Besides recognizing our landmark building and the remarkable variety of public events held here, community leaders are aware – either impressed or dismayed - by First Congregational UCC's progressive spirit and style, as demonstrated by such commitments as Open & Affirming, Immigrant Welcoming, and the ArtReach Gallery, our presence in interfaith and intercultural activities, and our collaboration with numerous community ministry partners (in excess of 70 in a typical year).

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

New people often say they were attracted by the progressive theology, the spiritual environment, the engaging worship (especially the splendid music and the thoughtful sermon), the sincere welcome, the community service and social justice opportunities, and the acceptance of diverse personal viewpoints, styles, and interests.



# 5. REFERENCES

Name up to three people who have agreed to serve as phone and written references.

## Reference 1

Name: Reverend Gene Ross  
Position: Associate Conference Minister (Retired)  
Setting: Central Pacific Conference  
Telephone: 503-255-6068  
Email: eugene-ross@comcast.net  
Relationship to the Congregation: Conference resource person for the congregation; married to previous Senior Minister, Patricia Ross

## Reference 2

Name: Rev. Dr. Janet Parker  
Position: Interim Senior Minister  
Setting: Local Church  
Telephone: 503-974-4166  
Email: revjanpark@gmail.com  
Relationship to the Congregation: Interim Pastor

## Reference 3

Name: Eliza Hooshier  
Position: Harm Reduction Coordinator, Portland People's Outreach Project (PPOP)  
Setting: Non-profit  
Telephone: 503-489-7182  
Email: eliza.hooshier@gmail.com  
Relationship to the Congregation: Rents space from the congregation

# 6. CLOSING THOUGHTS

## A. CLOSING PRAYER

The contributions to our worship by Director of Music/Organist Grant Edwards and the Choir are an ongoing source of spiritual sustenance to Portland's First Congregational United Church of Christ. We'd like to share an example with you: an anthem composed and directed by Grant and sung by our Locus Iste Concert Choir. Grant's rendering of Emily Dickinson's poem, "Hope" is the Thing with Feathers, has warmed us with unabashed hope and gratitude as our church has moved with increasing confidence through the "chilliest" challenges and "strangest" changes of the past. Now then, with ever-renewing faith in God's dauntless grace and love, we invite you to look ahead with us, remembering with joy the "tune without the words that never stops at all."

*"Hope" is the thing with feathers –  
That perches in the soul –  
And sings the tune without the words –  
And never stops – at all –*

*And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard –  
And sore must be the storm –  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm –*

*I've heard it in the chilliest land –  
And on the strangest Sea –  
Yet – never – in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb – of me.*

~ Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)  
[https://soundcloud.com/grant-edwards-619672457/  
hope-is-the-thing-with-feathers](https://soundcloud.com/grant-edwards-619672457/hope-is-the-thing-with-feathers)

## B. 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.

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

Transition Team: Joanne Albertsen, Frank Baldwin (Chair), Julie Blanchard, William Cunitz, Ted Heid  
Interim Senior Minister Janet Parker  
Treasurer Belinda Moos  
Business Manager Cara Rothe  
Church Council: Moderator Daniel Russo, Past Moderator Anne Sullivan  
Communications Coordinator Andre Cordes

### **Additional comments for interpreting the profile:**

FCUCC gratefully acknowledges our consultants at The Center for Progressive Renewal, Rev. Cameron Trimble, CEO, who have assisted us with invaluable research, advice and support.

Signed: 

Name / Title: Daniel Russo, Moderator

Date: February 18, 2020

## C. CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION VALIDATION

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: Tyler Connoley, Conference Minister

Email: tyler@cpcucc.org

Phone: 575-956-3316

Date: March 4, 2020

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

# APPENDIX A

## 2020 CHURCH BUDGET

### Income

#### 4000 · Giving

4050 · Pledges	\$129,576
4051 · General gifts	\$27,000
4052 · Flowers	\$900
4053 · Memorials and bequests	\$5,000

Total 4000 · Giving **\$162,476**

#### 4200 · Designated gifts

4205 · Youth missions donations	\$614
4206 Christian Ed.: youth	\$500
4210 · Choir donations	\$200
4212 · Eve's Circle	\$700
4216 ArtReach	\$5,000
4218 Other Designated Donations	\$1,000

Total 4200 · Designated gifts **\$8,014**

#### 4300 · Building income

4301 · PCPA lease	\$357,500
4305 · Building rentals	\$60,000
4310 · Annex subleases	\$14,000
4315 · Weddings	\$3,000

Total 4300 · Building income **\$434,500**

#### 4400 · Grants

4401 · Brown Grant #1	\$9,785
4402 · Brown Grant #2	\$99,740

Total 4400 · Grants **\$109,525**

#### 4600 · Church sponsored activities

4601 · Art Reach commissions	\$1,000
4602 · Oliver annual lecture	\$1,000

Total 4600 · Church sponsored activities **\$2,000**

### Total Income

**\$716,515**

## Expense

6000 · Community Core Ministry	
6010 · Community general	\$600
6015-Director of Faith Formation	\$54,418
6016- Music Education	\$1,100
6021 · Music Director/Organist	\$25,400
6022 · Choir Assistant	\$3,000
6023 · Choir leaders	\$18,437
6024 · Special Music	\$2,400
6026 · Organ Maintenance	\$350
6028 · Other Musicians	\$600
6029 · Music supplies	\$500
6032 · Choir Parking	\$300
6034 · Church Leader Parking	\$300
6810 · Member Parking	\$700
6035 · Eve's Circle expenses	\$700
6036 · Eve's Grandma Agnes expenses	\$597
Total 6000 · Community Core Ministry	<b>\$109,402</b>
6050 · General worship	
6051 · Sub. preacher	\$800
6052 · Flowers expenses	\$900
6053 · Other worship expenses	\$1,500
Total 6050 · General worship	<b>\$3,200</b>
6070 · Christian education	
6071 · Chr. Ed. general account	\$1,700
6073 · Adult Education	\$500
6080 · Youth ministry	\$2,000
6081 · Youth mission trip	\$3,000
6082 · Fam. retreat scholarships	\$200
6083 · Teen Ministry Coordinator	\$4,840
6084 · Childrens Ministry Coordinator	\$4,840
6085 · Child Care Provider	\$3,800
Total 6070 · Christian education	<b>\$20,880</b>
6200 · Peace-making core ministry	
6201 · Peace-making general account	\$1,600
6202 · Local service projects	\$3,600
6203 · Our Church's Wider Mission	\$9,229

6204 · Pastor's disc. fund expenses	\$524
6205 · Open & Affirming expenses	\$500
6206 · Immigration Task Force	\$1,250
<b>Total 6200 · Peace-making core ministry</b>	<b>\$16,703</b>
6300 · Hospitality core ministry	
6301 · Hospitality gen. account	\$1,800
6302 · Sunday fellowship expenses	\$1,000
6350 · Church sponsored events	
6351 · Oliver Lecture	\$3,200
6352 · ArtReach Gallery	\$7,300
6360 · Other CSE's	\$3,500
<b>Total 6350 · Church sponsored events</b>	<b>\$14,000</b>
<b>Total 6300 · Hospitality core ministry</b>	<b>\$16,800</b>
6500 · Ministerial staff	
6501 · Sr. Min. Salary	\$62,025
6502 · Sr. Min. Housing	\$40,985
6503 · Sr. Min. SECA	\$7,498
6504 · Sr. Min. Health/dental	\$11,831
6505 · Sr. Min. Life/disability	\$1,168
6506 · Sr. Min. Pension	\$13,888
6507 · Sr. Min. expenses	\$4,000
6508 · Sr. Min. Continuing Ed.	\$750
6509 · Sr. Min. Transport/Parking	\$3,124
6560 - Pastoral Ministry Associate	\$10,000
<b>Total 6500 · Ministerial staff</b>	<b>\$155,269</b>
6600 · Personnel expenses	
6609- Comm./Acc. Coordinator	\$39,130
6610 · Reception Assistant	\$12,090
6613 · Facilities Manager	\$48,797
6614 · Custodians	\$20,380
6615 · Business Manager	\$61,200
6616 · Business Manager parking	\$3,031
6617 · Staff health insurance	\$25,080
6620 · Payroll tax expense	\$25,504
6621 · Workers Comp Insurance	\$4,800
6600 · Personnel expenses - Other	\$1,000
<b>Total 6600 · Personnel expenses</b>	<b>\$241,012</b>

6650 · Business Operations Expense	<b>\$3,500</b>
6700 · Building and rental expenses	
6701 · Building rentals	\$8,000
6702 · Wedding expenses	\$500
6703 · Sublease expenses	\$1,500
Total 6700 · Building and rental expenses	<b>\$10,000</b>
6800 · Building/facility expenses	
6801 · Water	\$5,000
6802 · Gas	\$8,300
6803 · Electricity	\$9,700
6804 · Sanitation	\$6,000
6805 · Security & Safety	\$4,500
6806 · Repairs - ordinary	\$13,000
6807 · Repairs - major	\$44,770
6809 · Building & kitchen supplies	\$5,000
6811 · Elevator monitoring	\$2,000
Total 6800 · Building/facility expenses	<b>\$98,270</b>
6850 · Annex expenses	
6851 · Annex electricity	\$4,000
6852 · Annex security	\$600
6853 · Annex rent	\$42,184
Total 6850 · Annex expenses	<b>\$46,784</b>
6900 · Office Expenses	
6901 · Office supplies	\$5,000
6902 · Office Equipt. Maint.	\$2,500
6903 · Office Equip. Purch.	\$4,500
6904 · Postage	\$300
6905 · Printer lease expenses	\$8,000
6906 · Web/telephone expenses	\$11,500
Total 6900 · Office Expenses	<b>\$31,800</b>
6950 · Other general expenses	
6951 · Insurance	\$19,350
6952 · Conference Delegate Expenses	\$1,250
6953 · Payroll service	\$2,500
6954 · E-giving expenses	\$1,300

6956 · Bank charges	\$50
6957 Transition Expenses	\$14,000
6959 · Other prof. services	\$300
<b>Total 6950 · Other general expenses</b>	<b>\$38,750</b>
6960 · Dues and subscriptions	
6961 · Conference per capita dues	\$3,250
6962 · EMO Dues	\$300
6964 · Licenses & permits	\$1,500
6965 · Stewardship	\$1,000
<b>Total 6960 · Dues and subscriptions</b>	<b>\$6,050</b>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$798,420</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>-\$81,906</b>
Other Income	
9000 · Budgeted investment transfers	
9005 · Knapp Fund transfer	\$2,587
9015 · Oliver Lecture transfer	\$2,203
9020 · Restr. Endow. transfer	\$2,142
9025 · Reserve fund transfer	\$38,318
9030 · Pastor's Disc. transfer	\$524
9035 · Youth Mission transfer	\$1,000
9040 Building Transfer Fund	\$20,000
9050 Reserve Fund Youth Teacher transfer	\$9,132
9060 Reserve Transition Costs	\$6,000
<b>Total 9000 · Budgeted investment transfers</b>	<b>\$81,906</b>
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>\$81,906</b>
<b>Net Other Income</b>	<b>\$81,906</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$0</b>

# APPENDIX B

## REFERENCE LETTERS

### REFERENCE FOR

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UCC  
PORTLAND, OR

### Person Providing the Reference:

The Reverend Eugene Ross  
503.255.6068  
[eugene-ross@comcast.net](mailto:eugene-ross@comcast.net)

I related to First Congregational as a member during the time my spouse, Patricia Ross, served as senior minister. Prior to that time I was a Conference staff resource person to the congregation.

### AREAS OF STRENGTH AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL

#### Worship experiences:

First Congregational has had and continues to have during this interim period a history of providing members outstanding worship experiences. That means they have had a faithful and bold pulpit presence nurturing participants. Ministers have had freedom of the pulpit to address issues they felt important. The church is committed to an excellent music ministry with talented, professional leadership. Currently their music director –organist and choir director – continues to compose music for the choir to sing and hymns for congregational participation. Special music events are scheduled throughout the year attracting an audience beyond the church members.

#### Support of the arts:

The art gallery, which is a part of the church's mission, overseen by a professional curator, seeks to bring together thoughtful art and theology. The gallery is open to the community and draws the public into the building. The curator has also been responsible for gathering the downtown churches with art galleries into an association of church-related galleries. The church sanctuary offers a performing venue for local music groups.

#### **Providing leadership in exploring and taking stands on difficult issues:**

Throughout its history First Congregational has not shied away from taking stands and providing leadership in response to the difficult issues of the day. Early examples would include speaking out against the Oregon chapter of KKK and supporting organized labor. The church was very supportive of the local work of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, providing space for news conferences and ecumenical worship experiences.

First Congregational was the second church in the Central Pacific Conference to adopt the UCC Gay/Lesbian Covenant. The covenant has since been up-dated to include bi-sexual and transgender persons. On February 2 the church celebrated 28 years of living out the covenant.

First Congregational has voted to be an Immigrant Welcoming congregation and some of the members of the church are actively supporting Conference and ecumenical activities in response to this issue.

#### **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL**

First Congregational has experienced a rapid succession of pastoral leadership over the past eleven years which included two relatively short senior minister terms and two interim ministers. The church cannot afford for this pattern to continue. For the church to survive and thrive, leadership stability must be established.

Not unlike many downtown churches the presence of young families with children is missing. Many young adults and young families are locating in the many new condominiums built and being built in the central city. First Congregational – like many downtown churches – needs to develop a church growth strategy. This will not be an easy task but it should at least be undertaken. Unless the downturn in membership is reversed the future of the church and its ministry to the community is bleak.

Over the years First Congregational has provided a variety of small group offerings addressing the needs and interests of church members. Currently that area of church life has declined. Identifying and providing leadership for areas of interest needs to be re-energized.

**PERSONAL SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCE**

It was the tradition of First Congregational following the 11 p.m. Christmas Eve service to leave the sanctuary and go out on the church's arcade to enjoy hot chocolate and cider while the bell in the tower tolled the arrival of Christmas and our carols broke the silence of the night. Being together on that occasion left me with a deep sense of the church as family. But there is more. Year after year we would be joined by some of the homeless on the park blocks to sing with us and enjoy the hot beverages with us and be a part of the family of Christ welcoming the good news. To this day I remember that setting and the proclaiming of the good news of Christ's birth not in a private space but out in public and welcoming of others.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENT**

While I have pointed out the record of the church's outreach in the community over the years and continues into these days, I also believe the church should continue to explore new avenues of service. Like other major cities, Portland has a very difficult homelessness issue. Some of those homeless persons are persons who are mentally ill. They sit on the benches in the park blocks right in front of the church. There are other churches in the wider Portland area who sponsor socialization activities for persons living with mental illness. What can First Congregational do? I don't know but I think an effort should be undertaken to discover what might be done. Portland State University – three blocks from First Congregational – has an excellent school of social work. What might the church and the school do together in addressing this challenge?

Reference by Rev. Dr. Janet Parker  
Interim Senior Minister  
First Congregational United Church of Christ, Portland  
[revjanpark@gmail.com](mailto:revjanpark@gmail.com)  
503-974-4166

**Describe some areas of strength in this church's ministry.**

First Congregational UCC is a vibrant congregation in the heart of downtown Portland that has long been recognized for its progressive voice and inclusive spirit. Proudly Open and Affirming, FCUCC continues to stretch into new ways of welcoming LGBTQIA+ people as well as people of all racial, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds. FCUCC also attracts individuals with a wide diversity of theological views while maintaining its grounding in the UCC stream of the Christian tradition. I have been impressed at the ways in which the congregation genuinely desires to make all people feel proactively welcomed into the life of the church, including, for example, a new family with an autistic son, people struggling with mental illness, and houseless persons who participate in church services and fellowship hour.

FCUCC also enjoys a growing reputation for its contributions to the city's arts district. In addition to welcoming a wide array of cultural events into its historic sanctuary/concert hall, the church boasts an acclaimed art gallery curated by a retired art historian and pastor. The curator, Dr. Sheldon Hurst, has taken the lead in organizing other downtown churches into the 7X7 Gallery Consortium. A new arts library has added yet another dimension to the artistic portfolio that the church offers to the wider public. The congregation has also long been known for its excellent music program, now expanding under the inspired leadership of Music Director/Organist Grant Edwards. In addition to the weekly offerings provided by the Sanctuary Choir, occasional performances by a combined church/community choir—Locus Iste—features original compositions by Grant Edwards and attracts people from across the metro area to their concerts.

Additionally, the church is strongly committed to ministries of service and compassion, ranging from a Called to Care lay visitation program, an active prayer ministry, participation in meal programs for the houseless and hungry through Potluck in the Park and Transitions Projects, and informal support for members who need food brought to their homes when recovering from illness, childbirth or other life events.

Finally, the congregation benefits from a deep bench of retired pastors who are often willing to offer support in various ways, including occasional preaching and worship leadership, on call pastoral care when the pastor is away, and adult education programs. I have found these wonderful folks to be supportive and not intrusive in their relationship to the pastoral staff and congregation.

**Describe some areas for improvement in this church's ministry.**

Due to the geographical distribution of the congregation across Metro Portland and other factors, it can be hard to find times when congregation members can gather for special programming outside of Sunday mornings. As a result, in the last few years, the number

of educational and fellowship opportunities for members has diminished. Congregants would benefit from more opportunities to develop deeper relationships, to learn and serve together, and to simply have fun with each other. The congregation appears hungry for these opportunities but a strategy needs to be developed to find ways for busy and far flung people to engage in ways that work for them. A related challenge is the need to develop a deeper pool of volunteers and leaders to share in the leadership and ministry of the church alongside paid staff. These are no doubt challenges shared by many churches these days, simply made more acute by the realities of ministry within a “destination” as opposed to a “neighborhood” church.

A final area for improvement that simply needs more focused attention is a strategy for incorporating newcomers and newer members into the existing congregation, and bridging the gap between those who come with new energy and ideas and those who are used to “the way things have been.” A balance between striking out into exciting new areas of ministry and tending the souls of established members, between outreach in the community and nurturing the hearth fire of the congregation is needed from new pastoral leadership.

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

In 2019, the church’s ArtReach Gallery Curator and I created a midweek Lenten series involving visual images from the art exhibit *Doors in Iran*, Persian Poetry, Scripture, and Taizé music. Each evening a different image of “door” from the exhibit, the poetry, and the Bible served as a guide in our meditations related to personal and social justice concerns. For example, we had sessions on “The Life Door,” “The Eye Door,” “The Ear Door,” “The Truth Door,” and “The God Door.” This multidisciplinary and multisensory journey was the most creative midweek Lenten series I’ve ever had the privilege of experiencing. It so happened that a midweek AA group was meeting right before the services started in the same area of the church, and we invited them to join us for the soup supper and stay for the service if they wished. This resulted in the delightful outcome of the entire AA group joining us for the Lenten series and pitching in to help with the soup suppers. This experience highlights the synergy that can spontaneously develop at FCUCC given its strengths in arts & music, worship, and welcoming newcomers and the public into its space and its programs.

**Anything else you wish to share.**

After having served as Interim Senior Minister of this congregation for the last year and a half, I feel confident that it is poised to welcome new pastoral leadership with open arms, warmth and enthusiasm. The congregation has been on a journey of healing and learning and has greater clarity now on its unique strengths and challenges, its assets and its weak points. The congregation is in a good financial position with excellently maintained facilities in a prime location for ever more vital ministry to the downtown and metro Portland communities. More work needs to be done in honing in on a strategic mission and vision for outreach and growth, particularly in younger demographics, but the constant stream of visitors and increasing visibility of the congregation in the downtown cultural district yields great potential for a revitalized and growing ministry. I believe that with the right leadership, great days lie ahead for First Congregational UCC.

## REFERENCE 3

Eliza Hooshlar, Harm Reduction Coordinator, Portland People's Outreach Project (PPOP)

503-489-7182, [eliza.hooshlar@gmail.com](mailto:eliza.hooshlar@gmail.com), I volunteer with PPOP, a non-profit harm reduction organization that leases an office at the church at a reduced rate to use for our program storage space. The church also provides the conference room and occasionally other community spaces for our weekly work parties and monthly business meetings.

## PROMPTS FOR REFERENCES

### **Describe some areas of strength in this church's ministry.**

The church's ministry works toward inclusivity of all members of the community, including underserved populations. They have lived into this ministry through their relationship with PPOP over the past two-and-half years.

**COMMUNITY:** The business manager, Cara Rothe, has been especially welcoming and inviting to our non-profit group. She has fostered an environment of acceptance, curiosity and community between PPOP and each of the two ministers who have served previously, the church staff, other non-profits who have offices in the building, and members of the congregation. We are so thankful to have this working relationship with the church where we feel safe and supported as a community organization.

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE & COMMUNITY IMPACT:** We are an all-volunteer organization with a small annual budget. The reduced rent has saved us approximately \$2100 per year in storage costs and \$1200 in meeting space costs since we were able to move into this space. This is a huge help for our organization and allows us to focus our limited funds on purchasing and distributing new needles and other medical supplies to drug users that help to prevent the spread of HIV and Hepatitis, as well as Narcan Kits which reverse the effects of opioid overdose and save lives.

**DIGNITY:** We have a diverse base of volunteers. From doctors, nurses, lawyers and public health employees, to folks who found us through accessing our services and are making transitions to find housing, work, and live substance free. We have retired volunteers, college students, parents who bring their children (like me!) and everything in between. The safe, warm, clean and secure

environment of the church unifies us and acts as a reminder to all of our volunteers that each of us has dignity and that the church sees the value of what we do, as an organization and as individuals. It is such a joy to work alongside other volunteers on Wednesday evenings and to be a part of the community that is built under the roof of this safe haven. For some of our folks, the stability and comfort of the church for a few hours on a Wednesday night work party is one of their only constants in their lives from week to week. The power of this community space cannot be overstated.

**Describe some areas for improvement in this church's ministry.**

I'd like to see more connection with the congregation going forward. They've been enthusiastic about contributing to warm clothing drives for PPOP and other indirect forms of service, such as providing us with this safe and stable space. To truly live into the church's mission of hospitality, community and peacemaking, I'd love to offer the congregants deeper and richer opportunities to work alongside PPOP and to further their understanding of the benefits of harm reduction and the complex issues experienced by the unhoused members of their community through education, speaking opportunities and volunteer opportunities.

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

There have been so many for me. I remember the very first meeting we had with Cara and Michael back in summer of 2017. I brought my infant foster son (who is now a 3-year-old and adopted by me!) and it felt like a long shot that we'd actually be allowed to use the church space to meet our many needs. We had been storing supplies in a rat and ant infested garage of an old "punk house" in NE Portland. The house had been sold to developers and was set to be demolished. Our monthly meetings were held at a dingy bar in old town Portland and folks were struggling to find spaces to meet for weekly work parties. PPOP was operating on a scarcity model and I was emotionally exhausted, both as a key organizer during that period of uncertainty, and as a first time mom navigating the foster system, though I hadn't yet acknowledged the extent of my depletion that day I first stepped into the church office.

Cara was so welcoming and listened carefully to everything we had to say, taking notes, asking tough questions and deeply considering our requests. I remember the wave of relief that washed over me when, at the very end of the meeting, she looked up from her notepad and said simply, "Yes, I think we can help you." I felt held and supported in a way that I hadn't felt in months. It dawned on me that I would no longer have to tote my child in a heavy car seat through a mucky backyard and into a moldy, musty infested garage to stock supplies each week. I

felt wrapped in safety and hope, and I knew that so many others in our organization would soon feel that same relief. It was powerful.

I am grateful to this day every time I slide my key into the lock of the office door and tote my (now 2 young kids!) into the clean, warm lobby to welcome smiles and offers of help to unload supplies. What the church has given to PPOP, to me, to my family, to so many folks in Portland who are able to feel the radical love that PPOP serves up each Friday and Sunday around town is immeasurable.

**Anything else you wish to share.**

I look forward to working with the new minister and continuing to share PPOPs mission of radical love with the church!

---

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST - PORTLAND, OR**

1126 SW Park Avenue Portland, OR 97205 | (503) 228-7219

[uccportland.org](http://uccportland.org) | [facebook.com/uccportland](https://facebook.com/uccportland) | [twitter.com/uccportland](https://twitter.com/uccportland)