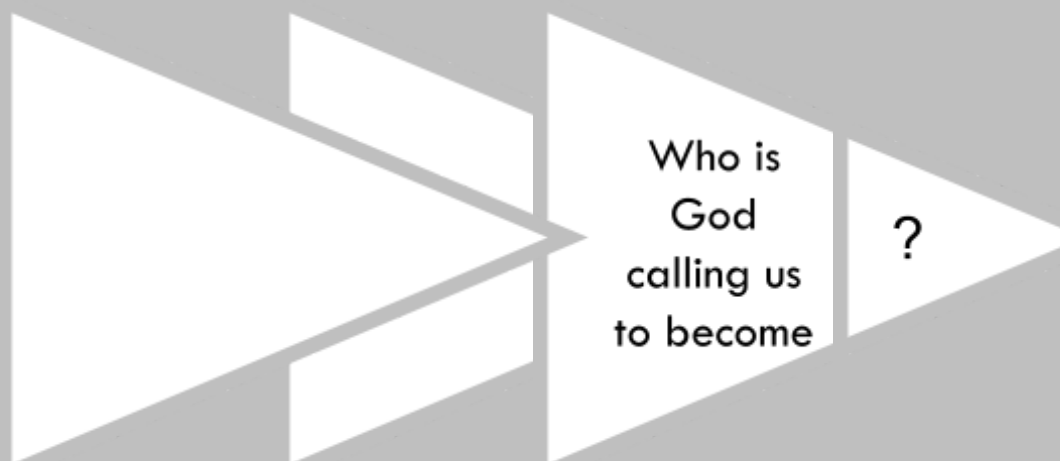


INTRODUCING THE NEW LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE



The new Local Church Profile is not just for congregations in search of a pastor. *All* congregations are encouraged to engage in its process of discovery every 3-5 years. The UCC Local Church Profile reflects valuable data, assesses ministry, clarifies change, and helps advance the calling of the congregation. Not just to be completed by a search committee – the more participation, the better!

Rachel Hackenberg

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

United Church of Christ First Congregational
Crete, Nebraska

Senior Pastor of Worship and Liturgy

Iowa, Nebraska & South Dakota Conferences

January 10, 2023

LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE CONTENTS

Position Posting

Who Is God Calling Us To Become?

Who Are We Now?

Who Is Our Neighbor?

References

Consent and Validation

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

INSTRUCTIONS

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

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

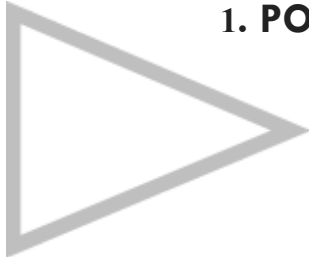
The interim season is not the only time in a church's life when it's valuable to give attention to explore a congregation's vocation. Three sections of the Local Church Profile – **WHO ARE WE NOW**, **WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR**, and **WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME** – are meant to be updated every 3-5 years.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

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

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

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

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



1. POSITION POSTING

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

1a. LISTING INFORMATION

Church name: United Church of Christ First Congregational

Street address: 400 E 12th Street, Crete NE 68333

Supplemental web links: <https://www.ucccrete.org/home>

Additional ecumenical affiliations (e.g. denominations, communions, fellowships): NA

Conference: Iowa, Nebraska & South Dakota Conferences

Association:

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

Pastor Sarah Rentzel Jones

Associate Conference Minister

808-631-2444 (cell)

sarah@ucctcm.org

Summary Ministry Description:

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

United Church of Christ First Congregational is a church with regular attendees and members from infants to elderly. The congregation is made up of members who are new to the area, new to the church or who are long-time, multi-generational members of First Congregational. We need a pastor who will minister to that entire spectrum of people as well as support our outreach and ministry within and around the Crete community. *We would appreciate interested ministerial candidates to share their ministerial profiles by Friday, March 31. However, we will continue to accept profiles until the position is filled. If there are any questions, please reach out to one of the Search & Call Committee co-chairs, Jared List (jared.list@gmail.com) or Julie Rasgorshek (jarasgorshek@gmail.com).*

Photographs:

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



Church's front door



Arts and Recreation Center (ARC) during 150th celebration



Children's message during Sunday service



Food distribution in the ARC



Christmas cookie and gingerbread decorating



Preparing for Wednesday youth programming



Community meals on Wednesday in the ARC



Wednesday youth fellowship in the ARC



Constru Casa mission in Guatemala

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

LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE – 201

Crete (25 miles southwest of Lincoln) is a diverse and growing community of around 8,000 people, home to UCC-affiliated Doane University. As a welcoming, smaller community, the area could be described as one where people know and support each other. Crete is home to a critical access hospital, a growing school district, a new public library, and an active community arts council.

Current size of membership: approximately 284 active members (approximately 50 children 11 & under) / 80-90 in-person attendees in Sunday worship with 5-10 attending virtually on Sundays

Languages used in ministry (*other than English*): Church services and programming are currently offered in English. Our outreach and partnerships within the community make it such that Spanish is also used in ministry and outreach.

Position Title: Senior Pastor of Worship and Liturgy

Position Duration (*choose one, delete the other options listed*):

Settled – a called position intended for longer-term ministry in which the minister moves church membership to the congregation and moves standing to related association

Compensation Level (*choose one, delete the other options listed*):

Full-Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines?

Yes, the total package support meets conference compensation guidelines. In addition to the salary, the church has budgeted health insurance, housing stipend, pension, self-employment tax reimbursement, life and disability, worker's compensation, phone, professional development, and travel in the total compensation package.

1b. SCOPE OF WORK

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

We assume a 40- to 50-hour work week, which will include the broad scope of pastoral responsibilities, including:

- Preparing, leading, and preaching during Sunday services (in collaboration with the Administrative Assistant and including Communion on a schedule to be discussed with the Church Council)
- Assisting, coordinating and/or leading youth Christian education, including teaching Confirmation classes and leading adult Bible studies
- Attending the Church Council meetings (typically one Sunday a month, following the church service)
- Assisting with midweek youth programming
- Conducting baptisms, weddings, and funerals

- Performing pastoral care, including hospital visits and visits with homebound congregants
- Participating in staff meetings and maintaining semi-regular office hours
- Interacting with community partners and ministry of other churches in the area
- Providing support for existing community ministries

Core Competencies:

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

Based on the results of the 64 congregational surveys received (summary of results found in Appendix 1), the Search and Call Committee has derived the following three core competencies:

1) Effective Communicator and Preacher

- a) a person of faith who attends to and cultivates congregants' spiritual lives and needs
- b) is effective in planning and leading worship
- c) communicates effectively and clearly utilizing various modes of communication
- d) encourages people to relate their faith to their daily lives

2) A Pastor and Teacher Who is Effective Working with Youth, Adults, and Community:

- a) desires to minister to all ages through various opportunities including forming relationships with youth and guiding confirmation
- b) ministers to people in crisis situations, makes pastoral calls and is an effective counselor
- c) has a strong commitment to the educational ministry of the church
- d) identify people's talents and connect them with needs

3) Accepting of People of Diverse Backgrounds and Traditions:

- a) is active in ecumenical relationships
- b) continues, supports, and/or grows opportunities to serve the community
- c) regularly works at bringing new members into the church and encourages participation in First Congregational activities

1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

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

Compensation package ranges from \$68,900 to \$86,200 (salary plus housing allowance)

Benefits (choose one):

Salary plus benefits

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

The church does not have a parsonage and will offer the minister a housing allowance to live nearby. The church would offer a monthly allowance of at least \$1,100. In 2022, based on various real estate websites, the median home sale price was \$200,000 to \$230,000.

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

We, as a congregation, would expect our next minister to choose Crete as their area of residence. Supposing the next minister lives in Crete, the commuting expectations are minimal. The residential area of Crete can be accessed within five minutes by car. Many congregants will live within 2-3 miles of the church. Some congregants may live in surrounding towns like Denton, Martell, Hallam, or Dorchester, which are up to 15 miles from the church.

State any incentives (e.g. school debt reduction or retention bonus after a certain number of years in position): N/A

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

First Congregational pastors are encouraged to be active in the Crete interfaith community of pastors through Crete Cares as well as other more common ecumenical activities such as World Communion Day. These relationships are beneficial for the pastors, their congregations, and the community as a whole.

Additionally, our pastors have access to all professional support offered through the Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota Conference, and National UCC.

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

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

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

We envision our next minister to grow our membership, deepen our faith, support youth and adult programming, continue our current ministries/outreach, and strengthen ecumenical relationships within our community.

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

We envision our next minister taking an active role in supporting our community outreach efforts including:

- Crete Backpack Program, which provides bags of weekend food supplies for families of school-age children
- food distribution in partnership with Food Bank of Lincoln, Food Net, and Feed America
- Crete Cares, a coalition of ministers in the community who seek to address immediate community needs
- our church-run clothes closet
- a meeting space for community organizations, such as 4-H, Boy Scouts of America, the Crete Welcoming Circle (led by the City of Crete Community Assistance Director), family literacy, ELL, and GED classes conducted by Crete Public Schools Special Programs

We envision a minister who reaches out beyond the congregation by hosting community events and by sharing with us how we can be better people as a whole, as a community, and as a family.

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

Crete is a diverse community home to a growing Spanish-speaking population. Approximately thirty-five percent of the community speaks Spanish. In addition to a growing Latine population, Crete is home to community members who speak Karen, Vietnamese, and Mayan languages. In the past, the church has collaborated with several of the Latine ministers and their congregations, like *Dios es amor* [God is Love] as well as *Mujeres en acción* [Women in Action], a grassroots group of women who work to meet the needs of the community, including preparing and serving meals for the community. A ministerial leader who is bilingual or multilingual in Spanish and English would be a welcomed qualification.

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.

After reviewing the areas of excellence from *The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministry*, the following four desirable areas that our next minister would display. (The following categories and descriptions come directly from the document linked above.)

A) EXHIBITING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION AND ONGOING SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Loving God, following Jesus Christ, and being guided by the Holy Spirit; living a life of discipleship.
- Praying actively and nurturing spiritual practices.
- Being called to ordained ministry by God and the Church.
- Continuing discernment of one’s call in the community.
- Understanding the power of the Holy Spirit at work through the elements of Christian worship to nurture faith.

- Exhibiting a commitment to lifelong spiritual development and faithful personal stewardship.

B) PARTICIPATING IN THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS

- Practicing theological reflection and engagement as part of one’s sense of ministerial identity.
- Integrating theological reflection in teaching, preaching, and ecclesial and community leadership.
- Articulating a theology and practice of ministry consistent with the UCC Manual on Ministry.
- Demonstrating an appreciation for and participation in the ecumenical and interfaith partnerships of the UCC.
- Experiencing and appreciating a variety of theological perspectives. Embodying the UCC Ministerial Code.

C) WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE AND MERCY

- Drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression.
- Practicing the radical hospitality of God.
- Identifying and working to overcome explicit and implicit bias in the life of the Church.
- Understanding community context and navigating change within a community.
- Engaging in mission and outreach.
- Building relationships of mutual trust and interdependence.

D) STRENGTHENING INTER- AND INTRA- PERSONAL ASSETS

- Developing and maintaining a healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community, and life experiences.
- Living in relationships of covenantal accountability with God and the Church.
- Exhibiting strong moral character and personal integrity.
- Respecting the dignity of all God’s people.
- Understanding and ministering to stages of human development across the life span.
- Demonstrating excellent communication skills.

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?

Our mission statement is “Extend The Reach of Christ.” We strive to welcome all who enter our building and embrace diversity. We not only minister to our own members but to the wider community as well.

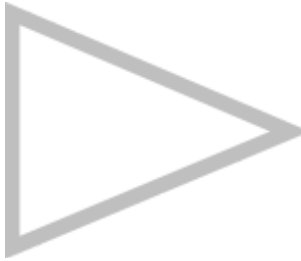
Describe how God is calling you to reach out to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of your community and congregation.

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

We have developed programs that have allowed our church to give large amounts of food and clothes away to people in our community who are in need. During the pandemic, it became apparent that we needed to expand our online presence for those who could not be with us in person. Like many of the programs in our church, we have recognized the importance of reaching beyond our sanctuary.

In the past year, we committed to improving access to our church by investing in technology and equipment to enhance our ability to stream church services online. We also began hosting Wednesday evening dinners for the community. We are in the process of reviving the musical groups that diminished due to the pandemic, including handbells, guitar and ukulele groups, and choirs. Congregants have interest in continuing and expanding prayer groups, fellowship groups, coffee groups, Bible study, and book study groups.

3. WHO ARE WE NOW?



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

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

3a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS

Describe your congregation’s life of faith.

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

We have no formal membership vows in our Church and would welcome a new pastor to help us develop some. Our mission statement is “Extend The Reach of Christ,” and we are trying our best to fulfill that statement. The Church has been willing to lead new ministries and to try new ideas. God is described as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in our worship liturgy.

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

As supported by the congregational survey results, First Congregational strives to be a welcoming, inclusive, and friendly church. Forty percent of respondents shared they felt this is a strength. The church has become one of the ‘first responders’ to community needs, administrating Crete Cares funds. Crete Cares is a collaborative effort by the churches in the community to provide funding and resources to community members who find themselves in precarious or vulnerable situations. This strength directly correlates with another strength identified by survey participants: the church has a strong community outreach and missions focus. Sixty-five percent of respondents identified this as a strength.

Additionally, youth programming was highlighted as one of the church’s strengths. There is Sunday School available for children in grades K-6, and during the week, there is K-12 after school programming one day a week, including confirmation classes. Lastly, but no less importantly, music is a strength in our church. The church’s music director enhances the worship experience and provides various opportunities for members to become more involved and explore their faith through music, including the children’s handbell choir, children’s choir, and the adult choir.

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

First Congregational holds two Sunday services. There is a 9 a.m. informal service and a 10 a.m. service. The 9 a.m. service is more message-focused, while the 10 a.m. service would be considered a traditional service. The 10 a.m. service, lasting approximately one hour, includes a children’s message, biblical readings, hymns, offertory, the sermon, prayers, the doxology, and Communion. Upon the children’s message's conclusion, children can attend Sunday School, which runs concurrently. Sermons are rooted in the scripture reading for the week and follow the lectionary. Choirs participate in the 10 a.m. service when scheduled.

Congregants often gather for fellowship before and after church services in our ARC (Arts and Recreation Center).

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

For example, how are young people in leadership? How do people continue to form their faith over a lifetime? Name a topic studied or curriculum used recently; what was the impact of this study on those who attended?

Our educational programs strive to provide meaningful study and experiences to further the faith of all members. We offer Sunday School classes for four different age groups (led by volunteers from the church), book clubs, youth groups, and seasonal studies and activities, which provide opportunities for members to learn and grow. A recent semester-ending review for the confirmation class involved many confirmands and adults working together to learn the history and foundations of the Christian faith.

First Congregational has strong multi-generational connections, and youth are welcomed and encouraged to be involved in the places where their talents and interests are.

We currently have an approximate Sunday School enrollment of around 50 children preschool-6th grade. Of those 50, approximately 35-40 are very active in programs, with an average of 15-25 on a typical Sunday. In terms of curriculum, we are using various resources tailored to each class's individual needs. We have found that one curriculum does not meet the needs of all children in our program, and it has proved more beneficial to find specific curriculum that is developmentally appropriate for each group.

During seventh grade, our youth enter into our Confirmation program which our bridge pastor leads. The program currently includes 17 students. Our Confirmation curriculum is new this year. The curriculum, written by our current bridge pastor, is modeled after one used at First Plymouth Congregational in Lincoln.

During Fall 2022, an adult book discussion over C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* took place, and a weekly Advent devotional group was led in December 2022. In late 2021/early 2022, the men's breakfast and prayer group reconvened after the pandemic and began meeting again periodically.

Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

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

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

A 12-member church council meets once a month for 60-90 minutes to discuss the business of the church. Members serve on various committees such as 1) finance, 2) buildings and grounds, 3) missions and outreach, 4) Christian education, 5) technology, and 6) fellowship.

Committees meet outside the regular monthly council meeting as needed to plan, research, recruit helpers, and/or complete the work then report back as necessary.

A personnel committee (six-member) meets at least on a bimonthly, if not monthly basis. Overall, committees make decisions and manage their respective budgets. Should special decisions need to be made or issues need to be addressed, it is discussed at the monthly council meeting.

The Church Council presents updates to the congregation approximately four times per year.

As with many volunteer-driven organizations, recruiting new help is a challenge. First Congregational needs a pastor who can inspire involvement among the membership to help connect more people to projects that interest them.

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

Action had to be taken quickly with the COVID-19 crisis in March 2020. We had to decide how to manage the lockdown and still pastor our church members. The national office was consulted for advice along with our hospital medical director, who was a member of our church. The moderator and the staff brainstormed and decided to do

Facebook Live streaming of the service and announcements were made via the electronic newsletter. We quickly gathered experts from our council and congregation to help move our worship services online. The pastor, administrative assistant, and music director held services socially distanced in the sanctuary for months. As our infrastructure improved, so did our virtual worship experience. We are still streaming services as it provides access for persons who otherwise could not attend, such as former members who have moved away.

The Church Council and Personnel Committee worked in concert with our senior pastor and staff to make decisions and create policies to help keep our congregation and community safe while still continuing our work over the next 18-24 months.

Communication, education, patience, and the willingness to compromise were our biggest assets through that phase of our ministry. Through that process, we soon learned that technology was an area in which we had lagged. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, First Congregational has created a Technology Committee with its church council. The mission of that group is to keep our technology up-to-date and secure so that we can stay connected and continue to serve our congregants as well as possible, even in the most trying circumstances.

First Congregational also serves as a place of refuge in the time of crises. For example, in the past, there was an apartment complex that caught fire in town. The church opened its door to provide temporary shelter and resources for displaced individuals. The church also has been designated as an evacuation site in the event of a crisis in the city or the schools.

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

3b. 11-YEAR REPORT

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



Church#:	428330	Schedule:	0	First Congregational UCC	Crede	NE	6833
Assoc:	460						

YEAR	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	CONFIRMATION	CONFESSION	TRANSFER OR REAFFIRM	DEATHS OR TRANS OUT	OTHER LOSSES	NET
2011	417	95	90	0	0	12	7		0 5
2012	395	116	64	6	0	16	12	32	-2
2013	394	112	63	3	0	11	15	0	-1
2014	394	112	63	0	0	0	0	0	0
2015	380	114	105	10	0	0	9	15	-1
2016	388	120	66	5	0	10	7	0	8
2017	371	120	100	0	0	4	3	18	-1
2018	365	118	100	6	5	3	6	14	-6
2019	365	118	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
2020	364	40	70	0	0	6	7	0	-1
2021	364	40	70	0	0	0	0	0	0

YEAR	CURRENT EXPENSES	CAPITAL PAYMENTS	BASIC SUPPORT	TOT OTHER UCC GIVING	TOTAL OCWM	OTHER GIFTS	WIDER MISSION	BASIC SUPP% CURR LOCAL	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
2011	\$142,939	\$21,109	\$4,900	\$2,646	\$6,646	\$1,439	\$8,085	2.80	\$172,133
2012	\$166,775	\$0	\$6,500	\$2,309	\$10,809	\$0	\$10,809	5.10	\$177,584
2013	\$167,707	\$0	\$5,500	\$2,644	\$8,144	\$2,366	\$10,500	3.28	\$178,207
2014	\$167,707	\$0	\$6,500	\$1,772	\$8,272	\$0	\$8,272	3.88	\$175,979
2015	\$170,549	\$0	\$5,500	\$1,180	\$6,680	\$0	\$6,680	3.22	\$177,229
2016	\$190,040	\$0	\$6,000	\$1,130	\$7,130	\$0	\$7,130	3.16	\$197,170
2017	\$180,725	\$0	\$6,129	\$1,530	\$7,659	\$0	\$7,659	3.39	\$188,384
2018	\$198,787	\$0	\$6,500	\$579	\$7,079	\$0	\$7,079	3.27	\$205,866
2019	\$198,787	\$0	\$6,000	\$1,346	\$7,346	\$0	\$7,346	3.02	\$206,133
2020	\$186,457	\$0	\$6,000	\$0	\$6,000	\$0	\$6,000	3.22	\$192,457
2021	\$186,457	\$0	\$5,500	\$620	\$6,120	\$0	\$6,120	2.96	\$192,577

% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	TOTAL ADDITIONS	TOTAL REMOVALS	CURR LOCAL EXPENSES	TOTAL OCWM	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
2016-2021	-6.19	-66.67	25.00	-100.00	-100.00	-1.89	-14.17	-2.33
2011-2021	-12.71	-57.89	-22.22	-100.00	-100.00	30.45	-7.91	11.88

This report is also found in the appendices. See Appendix 2.

3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	284	Estimate of those ages 12 & older
Number of active non-members:	10	Virtual followers
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	294	Based on above estimates

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	47	These numbers are from the 64 surveys completed.
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	10	These numbers are from the 64 surveys completed.
Less than 5 years:	3	These numbers are from the 64 surveys completed.

Number of total participants by age:

0-11	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	<i>Are these numbers an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
50	45	25	26	43	26	30	34	55	yes - estimates

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	0	The data (these and below) comes from the 64 surveys completed
Households with minors:	18	
Single adults age 35-65:	1	
Joint households with no minors:	31	Either with no minors or who are no longer living at home
Single adults over 65:	12	

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	13	The data (these and below) comes from the 64 surveys completed
College:	48	This includes four who identified associate's degree or some college
Graduate School:	50	
Specialty Training:	4	
Other (please specify):	N/A	

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	48	The data (these and below) comes from the 64 surveys completed
Adults who are retired:	56	
Adults who are not fully employed or unemployed:	14	

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

Occupations of members of First Congregational range from farmers to educators, medical providers to entrepreneurs, business people to government employees, and beyond.

Crete is home to several large industries, including the Smithfield meat-packing plant, Nestle Purina dog food plant, and the Bunge mill. In addition to these large employers, Doane University, Crete Public Schools, and the Crete Area Medical Center employ many people from Crete and the surrounding area.

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

The racial make-up of the church members is predominantly white, with some Hispanic members. While First Congregational is not racially diverse, we are diverse in age, education level, and political views.

Has your congregation recently had a conversation about welcoming diversity, or do you plan to hold one in the near future (perhaps using, for example, the Welcoming Diversity Inventory)? Please note the date. Comment after the exercise:

The congregation has not had a formal, sustained, and structured dialogue about diversity and being a welcoming church, nor is one currently planned for the future. However, as noted in the

survey results, many respondents (approximately 40%) indicated that one of the church's strengths is that it is a welcoming, friendly, and inclusive church.

3d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING

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

Ways of Gathering	Estimated number of people involved in attendance	Who plans each of the listed gatherings? (<i>list any and all worship planners, such as various lay leaders, pastors, musicians, other staff</i>)
Adult Groups or Classes	5	1 member
Baptisms (<i>number last year</i>)	7	pastor/staff
Children's Groups or Classes	60*	2 staff & members
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	Christmas-50 Easter-120	pastor, worship team
Church-wide Meals	75	members
Choirs and Music Groups	30	1 staff, members
Church-based Bible Study	0	
Communion (<i>served how often?</i>)	50 4x/mo	Pastor, members
Community Meals	20-serve 300 people 1x/mo	members and community partners
Confirmation (<i>number confirmed last year</i>)	17 (5 confirmed last year)	pastor
Drama or Dance Program	0	
Funerals (<i>number last year</i>)	6	Pastor
Intergenerational Groups	1	members/staff
Outdoor Worship	0-1	previous pastor led outdoor worship
Prayer or Meditation Groups	0	
Public Advocacy Work	~50*	staff, members
Retreats	25 (Youth Lock-in)	staff, members

Theology or Bible Programs in the Community	1*	pastor
Weddings (<i>number last year</i>)	2	
Worship (time slot: ___9:00-9:30___)	10	Pastor
Worship (time slot: ___10:00-11:00___)	~80 adults, 20 children	Pastor, staff
Young Adult Groups or Classes	0	
Youth Groups or Classes	30*	staff, members
Food ministry	500 families/monthly	staff, members

Additional comments:

Children's groups: Sunday School, Wednesday after-school program, Youth Group, Bell Choir, Ukulele Group, Choir, VBS, Youth Bible Study

Public Advocacy Work: Public Health Solutions Covid/influenza vaccine clinics, Immigrant Legal Center (ILC)/Nebraska Immigration Legal Assistance Hotline (NILAH), Crete Welcoming Circle (led by City of Crete Community Assistance Director), CASA

Theology/Bible Programs in Community: Before COVID, Bible study in local nursing homes.

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

Name	Three- or Four-Way Covenant? (3 or 4 or No)	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired? (Y or N)
Kelly Tyrrell	No	Interim Pastor	Lay Ministerial Standing	N
Jeff Hagaman	No	Pastor	Retired	Y
Wayne Schubach			Pulpit supply	Y

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: N/A

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

Staff Position	Head of Staff?	Compensation (full time, part time, volunteer)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
Office Manager, Director of Youth Ministry and Mission	No	PT	Personnel Committee	3 ½ yrs
Director of Music	No	PT	Personnel Committee	9 yrs
Custodian	No	PT	Personnel Committee	8 yrs

REFLECTION

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

We are very strong in our youth programming and community outreach; however, we would benefit from developing more young-adult and adult participation in church-based Bible study and/or activities.

Additionally, we need to find ways to encourage involvement in leadership roles among our younger families.

3e. CHURCH FINANCES

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

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$ 200,000
Endowment Proceeds (<i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i>)	\$0
Endowment Draw (<i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, “drawing down the principal”</i>)	\$0
Fundraising Events	\$0
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$428,998.77
Grants	\$0
Rentals of Church Building	\$9,400
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$0

Support from Related Organizations <i>(e.g. Women's Group)</i>	\$0
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$0
Other (specify):	\$0
Other (specify):	\$0
TOTAL	\$638,398.77

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

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

\$210,025 is the budget for the most recent fiscal year.

Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support. What is the percentage? 41%

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

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

\$6,100 Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM – Basic Support)

\$1,100 One Great Hour of Sharing

\$0 Strengthen the Church

\$200 Neighbors in Need

\$100 Christmas Fund

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered? If calculated as a percentage of the operating budget, what is that percentage? 3%

What is the church's current indebtedness? None

Total amount of loan debt: N/A

Reason for debt: N/A

Are capital and other payments current? N/A

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

N/A

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

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
2012	Repairs	\$40,000	\$40,000	

If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe:

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
N/A	N/A	\$	\$	

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

N/A

Does your church have an endowment? No

What is the market value of the assets? N/A

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

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

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

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

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates: N/A

Other Assets

Reserves (savings): N/A

Investments (other than endowment): \$116,745.15

Does your church have a parsonage? No

Fair market rental value of the parsonage: N/A

How is the parsonage used?

Street / City / State / Zip:

Finished square footage:

Number of Bedrooms, Number of Bathrooms:

Assessed real estate value:

Available for minister residence: Y/N

Expected minister residence: Y/N
Condition of structure, systems and appliances
Entity in the church responsible for review and needed repairs

Describe all buildings owned by the church:

Built in 1910, our spacious church includes a sanctuary with balcony space and choir loft. In 2000, the Arts and Recreation Center (fondly named the ARC) was added to provide fellowship space, a large serving kitchen, three private offices, and several classrooms.

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

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

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

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

The annual budgeting process drives the annual stewardship goal each year. However, the final budget is ultimately guided by the stewardship campaign results. If a budget increase of 10 percent is desired, members are asked/encouraged to increase their giving respectively. If stewardship results lag, the treasurer and finance committee consider budget revisions.

The proposed budget is presented to the congregation during the annual meeting each year for a vote of approval.

Recently, it was decided to add the part-time youth coordinator position to aid in youth, middle school, and high school engagement.

3f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

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

First Congregational’s history aligns closely with Doane University’s history. The university and church were founded within a year of each other in the 1870s. Doane was originally affiliated with the United Church of Christ. Throughout the history of both, Doane and First Congregational have collaborated. This collaboration today continues primarily through community outreach. Doane students help support the church’s missions, like food distribution, for example.

In the past ten years, as mentioned previously, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a significant event. However, the recent retirement of our former pastor of 19 years could also be seen as a significant event.

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

During the last ten years, First Congregational embraced the youth in our congregation. With the retirement of former youth and adult choir directors, the Church Council made the decision to hire a director of music who not only aids in worship service planning, but also leads all music groups, including youth choir, youth handbells, and adult choir. These efforts have aided in bringing new families into the church and keeping others engaged.

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

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

Through the pandemic, there were many opinions about how and when First Congregational should return to in-person worship services. When the local infection rates, vaccine availability, and the weather aligned, outdoor worship services were offered in addition to the virtual service we had been offering. And later, returning to church when families had learned to stay at home brought the challenges of how to best engage with our members and the community.

During the pandemic, we moved into more of a community services mission because we had the personnel and facilities to help with community needs like food distribution and vaccination clinics. Throughout this time, we continued our work with programs already active in our church, such as ELL classes and Crete Cares.

What we experienced is that the church is a microcosm of the divisive issues in our country, and where some members didn’t believe it was safe, others believed it was too conservative. While there is a lot of support for mission work from the congregation, the difference is in the extent to which our church resources can effectively support the needs of the community and where there needs to be a greater community response. We cannot be all things for all people, and we are running into some resistance.

The values of our church when it comes to a conflict are recognizing that all points of view are valid, but compromises are necessary. We value one another and the roles that each of us plays in our community of believers. We attempt to talk things out when we have differences of opinion. In this example, we want to help underserved persons in the community but also be good stewards of our physical, financial, and human resources. Beyond informal conversations to resolve the issue, the Church Council and Personnel Committee are available to help mediate and resolve issues.

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

Staff member's name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Jeff Hagaman	2003-2022	Yes
Robert Shofner	1997-2001	Yes
Steven Lashbrook	1989-1996	Yes
Wayne Schupbach	1977-1988	Yes

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

First Congregational has had only four pastors in the past 45 years, with two of those ministering for more than 10 years each. Many of our long-time members have known each of those pastors. Several of our members have grown up with our most recent pastor or came into the church and raised their children with just one pastor. This longevity has created continuity, close-knit relationships, and opportunities for adaptation to connect with a changing congregation.

We evolved in many ways during the past 20 years, doing so without vacating our commitment to our mission to “Extend The Reach of Christ.” In an effort to encourage more members to take on leadership or volunteer roles, we moved away from the previous leadership structure which included several larger committees with routine meeting requirements regardless of pressing activities. We currently have one 12-person church council which meets monthly. Within that council, seven subcommittees meet and operate as needed, pulling in other volunteers to fulfill their objectives. This change was made to entice more involvement with fewer individual time commitments.

Additionally, our membership has grown to include many families with young children, which is a blessing for any church. This was done through very intentional work by our previous pastor and volunteer staff. Their efforts included adding additional part-time employees to support our music and youth programs and ministries. We hired a youth director to help with youth programming and a ¾-time music director who also has a degree in music therapy and works with both our children and (occasionally) others for whom music is a comfort.

Congregational activities and engagement have also changed to provide all congregants opportunities to be involved and adapt to their busy schedules. Morning fellowship, Wednesday youth programming, family and multigenerational activities, adjustment to service and meeting times, electronic giving options, virtual church services and upgrading equipment to support them, and addressing food insecurity in the community are all examples of changes we have made to meet our congregants where they are and serve our community.

Our church has a long tradition of participating in mission opportunities at the local, national and international levels. Efforts have changed over the years based on the knowledge and experience of the leadership but have been a focus of ministry and resources. From mission trips building houses in Guatemala to the Food Bank backpack program and food distributions, we have worked together to help others.

As our leadership has observed the trends and changes in society, demographics in the community, and pastoral needs of the church, they have explored options to help us stay viable in the community. We have maintained a church family that is guided by the leaders and strives to be a whole greater than its parts.

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

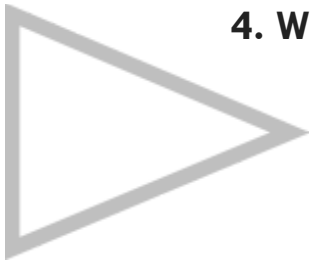
No

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

b. MISSION InSite

4a. COMMUNITY VISION

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

For example, which service activities has your church participated in this past year? Where has the church participated in global connections of care and justice? What is currently transformational in your church’s engagement with neighbors near or far?

First Congregational is known for its community outreach and missions. The church has become a community hub supporting our neighbors' needs. We have become a catalyst for connecting volunteers and resources to support people within the community. The church has been successful in engaging other servant leaders within the community including students from Crete High School, Doane University, members of other churches in town, and service groups.

First Congregational has partnered with Crete Public Schools, Doane University, Public Health Solutions, Nebraska Appleseed, Immigrant Legal Center (ILC)/Nebraska Immigration Legal Assistance Hotline (NILAH), Crete Welcoming Circle (led by City of Crete Community Assistance Director), Constru Casa, Food Bank of Lincoln, FoodNet, Feed America, and Backpack Program in collaboration with Crete Public Schools and Doane University.

Our church has partnered with Crete Public Schools to be the site for their morning adult ELL, family literacy, and GED classes Monday through Friday during the school year. Crete Public Schools staff teach the classes in the basement of the church and use the nursery for childcare during the classes. Additionally, the church has provided office space for an Immigrant Legal Center attorney.

Addressing food insecurity in our community is a top priority. We currently house the storage and packing operations for the Crete Backpack Program, which provides weekly backpacks of food for families of local students. Additionally, food and supplies are packed monthly on Friday evening for distribution during a community meal on Sunday afternoon for families in need.

First Congregational is the ‘face’ of our Crete Cares organization, which is made up of local churches and clergy. Donated funds are distributed as needed by church staff to people in need for heating bills, gasoline, etc.

Reaching a little farther outside our local community, for several years, members of First Congregational have traveled with Constru Casa to Guatemala to build homes for families. Fundraising efforts are supported by youth group activities, special collections, or events hosted at our church to help purchase supplies for the mission. Additionally, congregants donate toiletries, toys, shoes, and clothes that are sent with the volunteers.

At First Congregational we truly help our neighbors near and far.

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

First Congregational has regularly sent representatives to the Joint Annual Meeting, when held. A few were canceled due to COVID-19. We have a good relationship with the Heartland Conference.

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

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible to All (A2A) | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Peace |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creation Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Global Mission Church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Open and Affirming (ONA) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faithful and Welcoming | <input type="checkbox"/> WISE Congregation for Mental Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> God Is Still Speaking (GISS) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other UCC designations: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Border and Immigrant Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Designations from other denominations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inter-cultural/Multi-racial (I’M) | <input type="checkbox"/> None |

Reflect on what the above statement(s) mean(s) to your community. Is your congregation interested in working toward any of the above statements of witness in the near future?

First Congregational has not participated in the listed UCC designations. Our congregation is already on the cusp of many of these aspects and would be open to considering this idea.

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

Before the pandemic, First Congregational held an annual church service with the *Dios es amor* [God is Love] congregation. This service often occurred on World Communion Day. As mentioned previously, the church collaborates with other churches in the community to run Crete Cares, a collaboration among local ministers to provide resources to individuals living in precarious situations. The church also collaborates with the local small liberal arts university in town, Doane University. Doane has a Director of Religious and Spiritual Life. The university also has a historical connection with First Congregational, founded in the UCC faith tradition. Both Doane and First Congregational have called Crete home for 150 years.

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

Our mission statement is to “Extend The Reach of Christ,” and we spend a significant amount of time and effort living out the mission through children and youth programming, community outreach, and worship. Our church is often the first point of contact for addressing community needs, our children’s programming on Wednesday afternoons and evenings is well attended, and gathering for worship is a priority.

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?

In this called position, we seek a pastor who will fulfill the duties outlined in the job description, collaborate with the Director of Youth Ministry and Missions, and actively support the congregation’s spiritual lives and needs as well as missions and outreach.

What are we asking the pastor to do?

We seek a minister who is an effective communicator and preacher, works well with children and teens, accepts people from diverse backgrounds and traditions, and supports community outreach initiatives.

4b. MISSION InSite

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

The biggest concern among respondents was the ongoing impact of COVID-19. Behind that was social and political discord, followed by racial injustice.

A key opportunity for our church right now is that we are supportive of our community. If people are in need, we should be who they think of and where they go when they need support. The full Mission InSite report can be found in the appendices section in Appendix 3.

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?

As our congregation is not very racially diverse, we aren’t currently experiencing some of the same concerns as others. However, First Congregational congregants are very aware and in tune with social and political discourse in our society and seek to be a weapon against spreading fear as well as racial injustice.

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

The growing populations in the Crete community are largely newcomer or immigrant populations, particularly from Spanish-speaking countries. The UCC works closely with the school district and other churches, such as *Dios es Amor*, to support those families and any needs

that may arise. We have hosted joint services (prior to COVID-19) during World Communion Day.

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

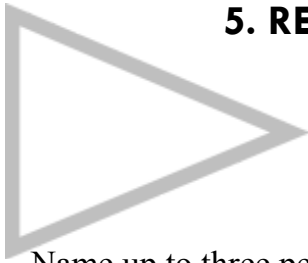
First Congregational is known for its community outreach and missions. The church has become a community hub supporting our neighbors' needs. We are known for our work addressing food insecurity in the community and for being the place to refer those in need.

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

The following statements are some of the examples for becoming involved:

- First Congregational is active in the community and welcoming of others.
- The opportunities provided through children's programming.
- Opportunities to serve others.

5. REFERENCES



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

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

REFERENCE 1

Name / Position / Setting
(Telephone / Email / Relationship to the Congregation)

Ryan Hintz

ryan.hinz@creteschools.org

Phone: 402-418-2486

Former City Council Member, Crete Public Schools Adult Programs Coordinator, and assists with food distribution

REFERENCE 2

Name / Position / Setting
(Telephone / Email / Relationship to the Congregation)

Pastor Wayne Schubach

shoebox@windstream.net

Former Pastor

REFERENCE 3

Name / Position / Setting
(Telephone / Email / Relationship to the Congregation)

Rebehak Mussman

Phone: 308-830-3908

Former member - relocated

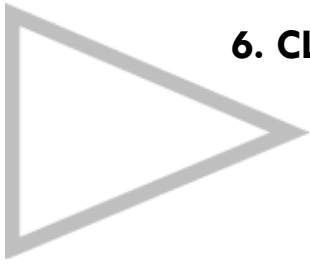
PROMPTS FOR REFERENCES

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

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

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

Anything else you wish to share.



6. CLOSING THOUGHTS

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

6a. CLOSING PRAYER

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

Romans 12: 3-8.

We have many parts in the one body, and all these parts have different functions. In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body. So we are to use our different gifts in accordance with the grace that God has given us. If our gift is to speak God's message, we should do it according to the faith that we have; if it is to serve, we should serve; if it is to teach, we should teach; if it is to encourage others, we should do so. Whoever shares with others should do it generously; whoever has authority should work hard; whoever shows kindness to others should do it cheerfully.

Together we pray for our search committee; to have the patience to wait upon God's timing and the wisdom to identify the candidate whose spiritual gifts align to our needs.

We pray that God will grant our next pastor strength to leave their current position and overcome the challenges of change while gaining a love for our church. We pray that God would increase their passion for the Word of God. We pray for open minds and open hearts as we prepare for the new pastor to be fully accepted and loved by our church family. We pray that they find meaningful relationships at our church.

6b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT

The covenantal relationship between a church and those called by that church to serve as pastors and teachers and in other ministerial positions is strengthened when vital information is openly shared by covenantal partners. To that end, we attest that, to the best of our abilities, we have provided information in this profile that accurately represents our church. We have not knowingly withheld any information that would be helpful to candidates.

As the committee charged with the responsibility for identifying and recommending suitable new minister for our church, we have been authorized to share the information herein with potential candidates. We understand that a candidate may wish to secure further knowledge, information, and opinions about our church. We encourage a candidate to do so, recognizing that an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing and healthy relationships between calling bodies and persons seeking a ministry position.

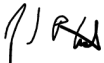
1. Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile? (*for example, church council or consistory, transition team, etc.*)

Search & Call Committee, Personnel Committee, and church staff

2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile: If there are any questions, please reach out to one of the Search & Call Committee co-chairs, Jared List (jared.list@gmail.com) or Julie Rasgorshek (jarasgorshek@gmail.com).

Signed: 

Name / Title / Date: Julie Rasgorshek, Search & Call Committee Co-Chair, 1/31/2023

Signed: 

Name / Title / Date: Jared List, Search & Call Committee Co-Chair, 1/31/2023

6c. VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

The congregation is currently in good standing with the association / conference named.

Staff Comment: Yes

To the best of my knowledge, ministerial history information is complete.

Staff Comment: Yes

To the best of my knowledge, available church financial information is presented thoroughly.

Staff Comment: Yes

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature: *Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones*

Name / Title: Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones, Associate Conference Minister, Iowa, Nebraska,
& South Dakota Conferences

Email: sarah@ucctcm.org

Phone: 808-631-2444

Date: 2/1/2023

Appendix 1

United Church of Christ First Congregational

The following data comes from a survey shared with the First Congregational congregation during the summer and fall of 2022. We received 64 survey responses from families and individuals. Below the Search and Call Committee shares some observations from the data with regards to the First Congregational's strengths and challenges. The subsequent table tabulates the number of responses for the eight most desirable qualities in our next pastor (from the prescribed qualities listed in the survey).

Church's Strengths: Common themes

- Community outreach and missions (~65% of respondents identified this as a strength)
- Youth programming (~42% of respondents identified this as a strength)
- Welcoming, inclusive, friendly church (~40% of respondents identified this as a strength)
- Music (~25% of respondents identified this as a strength)

Church's Challenges: Common Themes

- Irregular/declining service attendance, declining membership (22% of respondents identified this as a challenge)
- Lack of younger congregation members/families' involvement, attendance, and/or leadership (~19% of respondents identified this as a challenge)
- Perceived political preferences & references in the church, differing viewpoints (~13% of respondents identified this as a challenge)
- Sports, activities, other competing obligations outside of church (~6% of respondents identified this as a challenge)
- Finances and building maintenance (~6% of respondents identified this as a challenge)

As our pastor, our church would benefit from a person who...	✓/64
is an effective preacher/speaker	48
is a person of faith	34
is effective working with children	33
encourages people to relate their faith to their daily lives	31
is effective working with teens	30
is accepting of people with diverse backgrounds and traditions	29
helps people develop their spiritual life	28
is effective in planning and leading worship; ministers effectively to people in crisis situations; communicates effectively and clearly	26
makes pastoral calls on people in hospitals, nursing homes or homebound individuals; continues, supports, and/or grows opportunities to serve the community	23
maintains confidentiality	18
has a strong commitment to the educational ministry of the church; is effective working with adults	17
deals effectively with conflict; is a helpful counselor; is a good listener	15
regularly encourages people to participate in United Church of Christ activities and programs	14
is an effective administrator	13
organizes people for community action	12
is an effective teacher; works well on a team; encourages others to assume and carry out leadership; helps people work together in solving problems; helps people understand and act upon issues of social justice	11
has a well-defined sense of direction to their ministry; is active in ecumenical (interfaith) relationships and encourages the church to participate	10
works regularly at bringing new members into the church; regularly encourages support of our church's (First Congregational) wider mission; understands and interprets the mission of the church from a global perspective	9
reaches out to inactive members; plans and leads well-organized meetings; is skilled in planning and leading programs	8
has a strong commitment and loyalty to the United Church of Christ; helps people develop their leadership qualities	7
is effective with committees and officers	6

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

God is still speaking,
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



Church#: 420330

Assoc: 460

Schedule: 0 First Congregational UCC

Crete

NE 68333

YEAR	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	CONFIRMATION	CONFESSION	TRANSFER OR REAFFIRM	DEATHS OR TRANS OUT	OTHER LOSSES	N E T
2011	417	95	90	0	0	12	7	0	5
2012	395	116	64	6	0	16	12	32	-2
2013	394	112	63	3	0	11	15	0	-1
2014	394	112	63	0	0	0	0	0	0
2015	380	114	105	10	0	0	9	15	-1
2016	388	120	56	5	0	10	7	0	8
2017	371	120	100	0	0	4	3	18	-1
2018	365	118	100	6	5	3	6	14	-6
2019	365	118	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
2020	364	40	70	0	0	6	7	0	-1
2021	364	40	70	0	0	0	0	0	0

YEAR	CURRENT EXPENSES	CAPITAL PAYMENTS	BASIC SUPPORT	TOT OTHER UCC GIVING	TOTAL OCWM	OTHER GIFTS	WIDER MISSION	BASIC SUPP% CURR LOCAL	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
2011	\$142,939	\$21,109	\$4,000	\$2,646	\$6,646	\$1,439	\$8,085	2.80	\$172,133
2012	\$166,775	\$0	\$8,500	\$2,309	\$10,809	\$0	\$10,809	5.10	\$177,584
2013	\$167,707	\$0	\$5,500	\$2,644	\$8,144	\$2,356	\$10,500	3.28	\$178,207
2014	\$167,707	\$0	\$6,500	\$1,772	\$8,272	\$0	\$8,272	3.88	\$175,979
2015	\$170,549	\$0	\$5,500	\$1,180	\$6,680	\$0	\$6,680	3.22	\$177,229
2016	\$190,040	\$0	\$6,000	\$1,130	\$7,130	\$0	\$7,130	3.16	\$197,170
2017	\$180,725	\$0	\$6,129	\$1,530	\$7,659	\$0	\$7,659	3.39	\$188,384
2018	\$198,787	\$0	\$6,500	\$579	\$7,079	\$0	\$7,079	3.27	\$205,866
2019	\$198,787	\$0	\$6,000	\$1,346	\$7,346	\$0	\$7,346	3.02	\$206,133
2020	\$186,457	\$0	\$6,000	\$0	\$6,000	\$0	\$6,000	3.22	\$192,457
2021	\$186,457	\$0	\$5,500	\$620	\$6,120	\$0	\$6,120	2.95	\$192,577

% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	TOTAL ADDITIONS	TOTAL REMOVALS	CURR LOCAL EXPENSES	TOTAL OCWM	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
2016-2021	-6.19	-66.67	25.00	-100.00	-100.00	-1.89	-14.17	-2.33
2011-2021	-12.71	-57.89	-22.22	-100.00	-100.00	30.45	-7.91	11.88

THE
AMERICAN BELIEFS
STUDY
RELIGIOUS PREFERENCES & PRACTICES

The MinistryInsite Report 2021

Prepared for: Nebraska Conference UCC, Tri-Conference Ministries
Study area: Geography: Cities - Crete (NE)

Date of Report: 5/4/22
American Beliefs Study Version: 2021

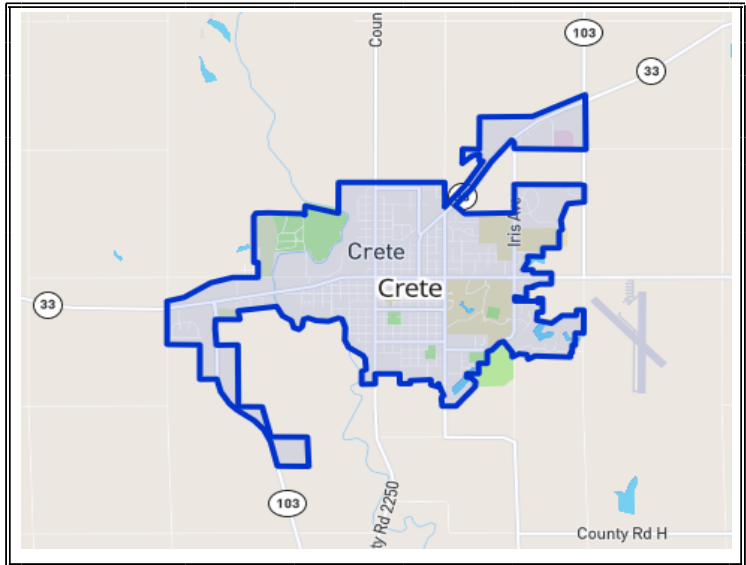
About the American Beliefs Study Reports

The American Beliefs Study provides a projection of likely religious beliefs, preferences, and practices for a defined study area. This report is based on the American Beliefs Study national survey, which MissionInsite conducts every five (5) years. While general religious data is available through various organizations, only MissionInsite can provide current local geography projections. This report is based upon the 2021 American Beliefs Study Survey.

The 2021 American Beliefs Study Survey series contains two reports. **ReligiousInsite** provides insights into community beliefs and religious preferences. **MinistryInsite** focuses on practical applications of the 2021 survey. It includes life concerns, reasons for non-participation (or considered nonparticipation) in a religious congregation or community, and a list of preferred ministries or programs. These are based on the specific study area. Customized priority lists address the study area’s concerns, program and ministry preferences and more.

The **ReligiousInsite Priorities** Report and **MinistryInsite Priorities** Report capture the priorities of some survey questions based upon strengths of beliefs plus the direction of the beliefs, whether towards agreement or disagreement. These two reports correspond to the full reports.

The Study Area



Contents of the MinistryInsite Report

The **MinistryInsite** Report has five sections that provide multiple views about a single topic.

Topics	Page
Life Concerns	2
Reasons for Non-Participation—Those Outside of a Religious Congregation or Community	12
Reasons to Consider Non-Participation—Those Inside a Religious Congregation or Community	17
Program or Ministry Preferences	22

How to Read the Different Report Types

Four windows provide insight into the respondent’s answers.

- Window #1:** Reveals the detailed responses across all options.
- Window #2:** Compares the study area responses to national average responses. For more details, see the last page.
- Window #3:** Compares data between this survey and previous surveys to reveal trends.
- Window #4:** Provides prioritized lists of the topic. This window is only available on certain topics and after applying analytics.

MinistryInsite Report 2021

Prepared for: Nebraska Conference UCC, Tri-Conference Ministries Date of Report: 5/4/2022
 Study Area: Geography: Cities - Crete (NE) American Beliefs Study Version: 2021
 American Beliefs Study Region: Midwest

Life Concerns

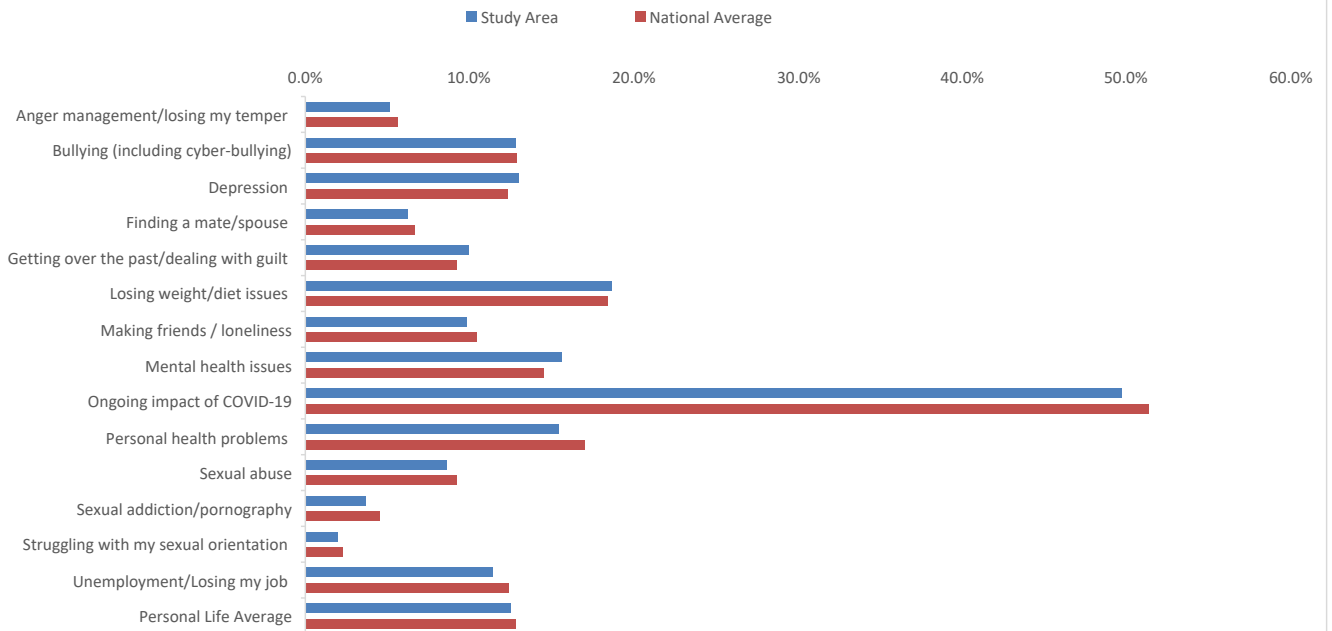
These tables present your study area's projected life concerns. Life concerns are broken into categories around a thematic correspondence, and each category shows the concerns that are more likely to dominate the study area. You can compare these to the national average to gain insight into your study area's trends.

At the end of this section, the top 15 concerns for your study area display, ranked by the strength of concern.

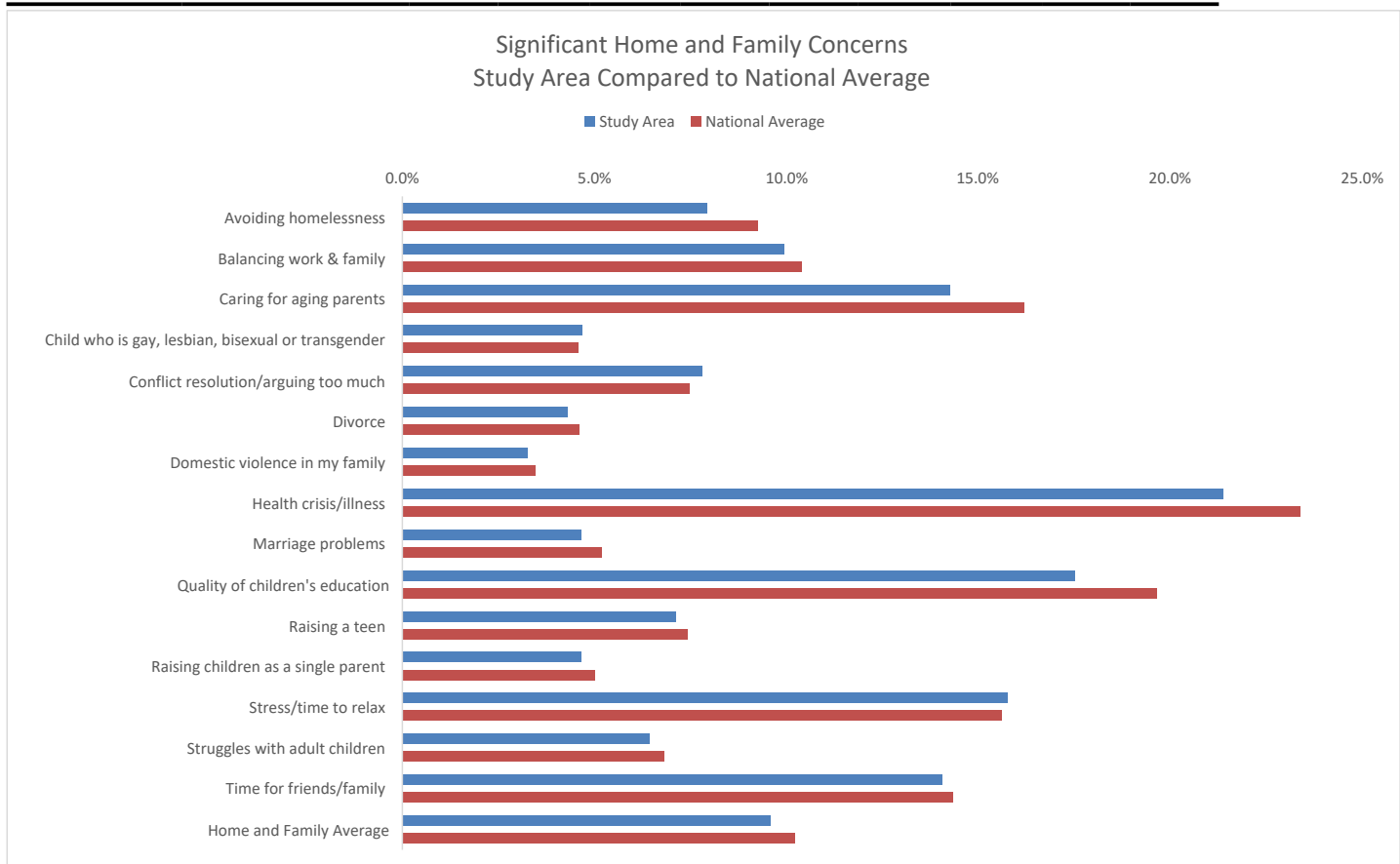
Concerns About Personal Health & Life

Study Area Compared to National Average	Study Area		National Average		Modest Concern	Significant Concern
	Modest Concern	Significant Concern	Modest Concern	Significant Concern		
Alcohol/drug abuse	14.7%	5.2%	15.1%	5.5%	98	95
Anger management/losing my temper	30.7%	5.2%	30.0%	5.6%	102	92
Bullying (including cyber-bullying)	27.2%	12.8%	26.0%	12.9%	105	99
Depression	36.4%	13.0%	35.8%	12.3%	102	105
Finding a mate/spouse	13.2%	6.2%	13.6%	6.7%	97	93
Getting over the past/dealing with guilt	38.5%	9.9%	37.4%	9.2%	103	108
Losing weight/diet issues	48.2%	18.7%	46.4%	18.4%	104	101
Making friends / loneliness	37.8%	9.9%	38.2%	10.4%	99	94
Mental health issues	32.9%	15.6%	33.7%	14.5%	98	108
Ongoing impact of COVID-19	40.3%	49.7%	38.3%	51.3%	105	97
Personal health problems	54.7%	15.4%	54.6%	17.0%	100	91
Sexual abuse	14.3%	8.6%	13.8%	9.2%	104	94
Sexual addiction/pornography	10.3%	3.7%	11.2%	4.5%	93	81
Struggling with my sexual orientation	5.3%	2.0%	5.3%	2.3%	101	88
Unemployment/Losing my job	24.5%	11.4%	23.9%	12.4%	103	92
Personal Life Average	28.6%	12.5%	28.2%	12.8%	101	97

Significant Personal Health & Life Concerns Study Area Compared to National Average



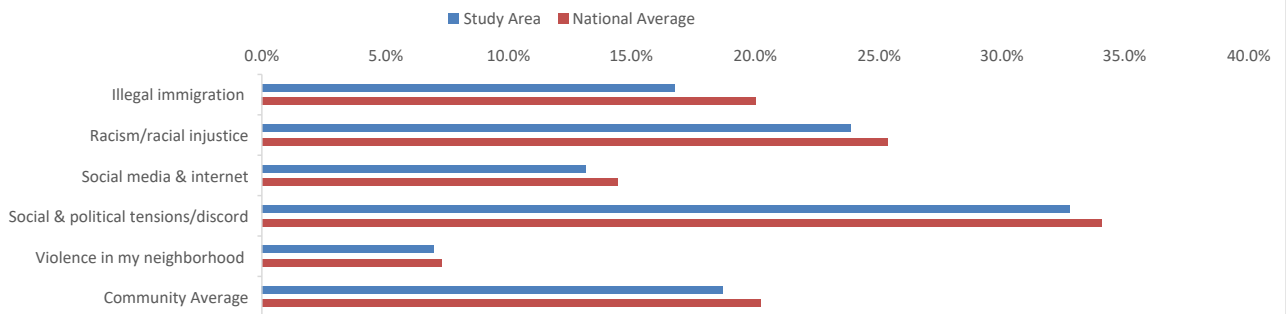
Concerns About Home and Family							
Study Area Compared to National Average	Study Area		National Average		Modest Concern	Significant Concern	
	Modest Concern	Significant Concern	Modest Concern	Significant Concern			
Avoiding homelessness	17.9%	7.9%	19.1%	9.3%	94	86	
Balancing work & family	30.9%	9.9%	30.5%	10.4%	101	96	
Caring for aging parents	28.5%	14.3%	25.4%	16.2%	112	88	
Child who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender	9.8%	4.7%	9.7%	4.6%	101	102	
Conflict resolution/arguing too much	30.1%	7.8%	31.2%	7.5%	96	104	
Divorce	11.8%	4.3%	11.8%	4.6%	100	94	
Domestic violence in my family	7.9%	3.3%	7.8%	3.5%	101	94	
Health crisis/illness	49.1%	21.4%	48.9%	23.4%	100	91	
Marriage problems	19.6%	4.7%	19.9%	5.2%	99	90	
Quality of children's education	23.9%	17.5%	24.0%	19.7%	99	89	
Raising a teen	12.9%	7.1%	14.1%	7.4%	92	96	
Raising children as a single parent	9.7%	4.7%	9.9%	5.0%	98	93	
Stress/time to relax	47.1%	15.8%	46.1%	15.6%	102	101	
Struggles with adult children	22.7%	6.4%	24.5%	6.8%	93	94	
Time for friends/family	48.3%	14.1%	47.6%	14.3%	101	98	
Home and Family Average	24.7%	9.6%	24.7%	10.2%	100	94	



Concerns About Community

Study Area Compared to National Average	Study Area		National Average		Modest Concern	Significant Concern
	Modest Concern	Significant Concern	Modest Concern	Significant Concern		
Illegal immigration	26.8%	16.7%	29.2%	20.0%	92	83
Racism/racial injustice	36.4%	23.9%	36.4%	25.3%	100	94
Social media & internet	39.5%	13.1%	38.4%	14.4%	103	91
Social & political tensions/discord	42.5%	32.8%	41.2%	34.0%	103	96
Violence in my neighborhood	28.7%	7.0%	30.7%	7.3%	93	96
Community Average	34.8%	18.7%	35.2%	20.2%	99	92

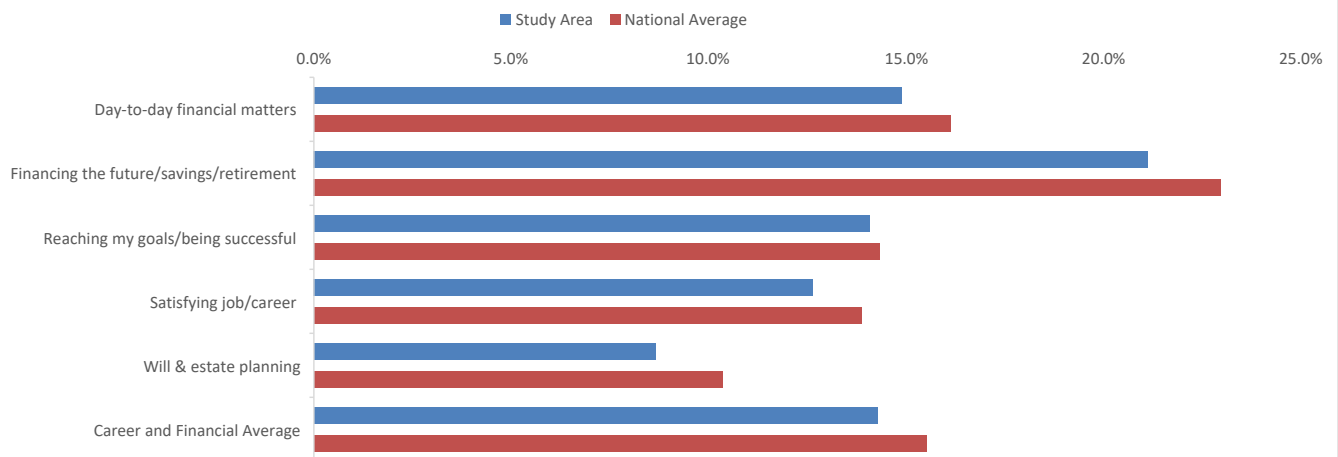
Significant Community Concerns
Study Area Compared to National Average



Concerns about Careers and Financial Matters

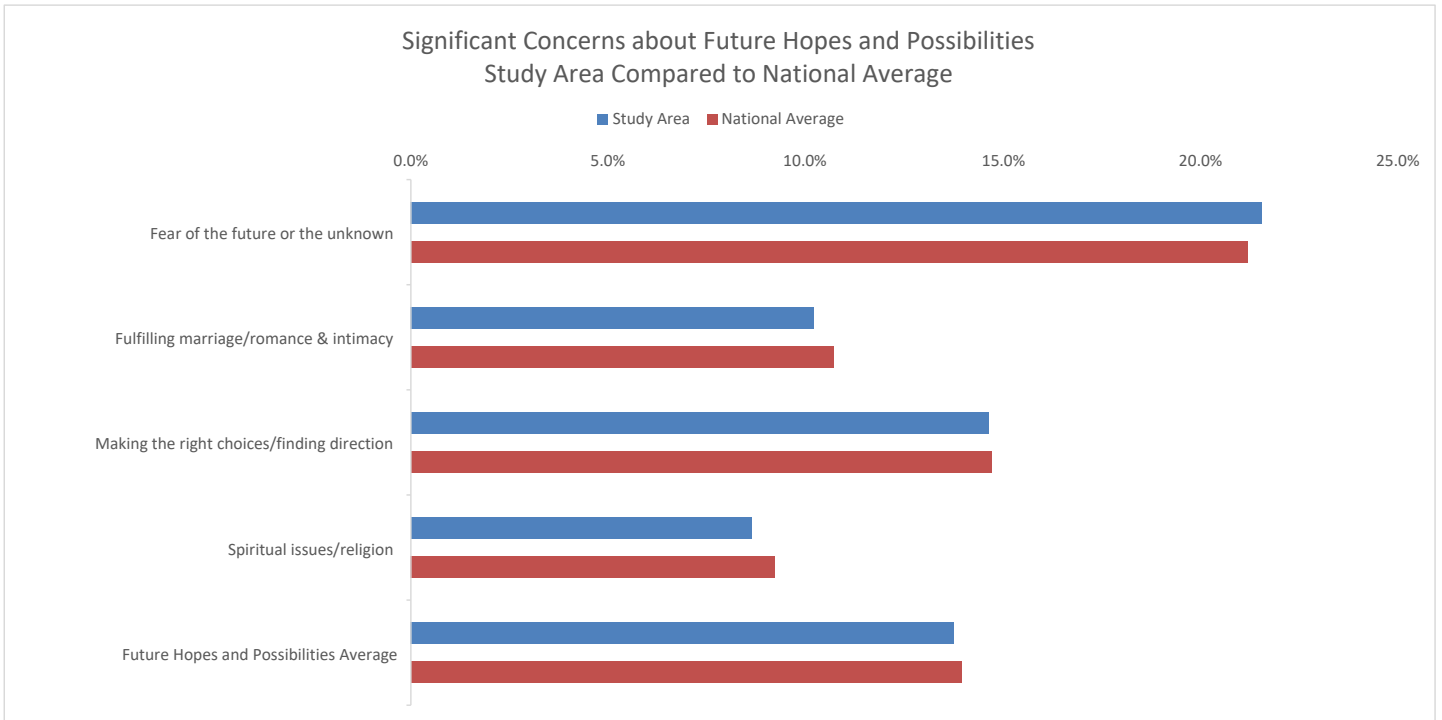
Study Area Compared to National Average	Study Area		National Average		Modest Concern	Significant Concern
	Modest Concern	Significant Concern	Modest Concern	Significant Concern		
Day-to-day financial matters	42.6%	14.9%	42.9%	16.1%	99	92
Financing the future/savings/retirement	48.2%	21.1%	46.8%	23.0%	103	92
Reaching my goals/being successful	42.0%	14.1%	40.3%	14.3%	104	98
Satisfying job/career	30.9%	12.6%	29.1%	13.9%	106	91
Will & estate planning	39.4%	8.7%	40.6%	10.3%	97	84
Career and Financial Average	40.6%	14.3%	39.9%	15.5%	102	92

Significant Concerns about Careers and Financial Matters
Study Area Compared to National Average



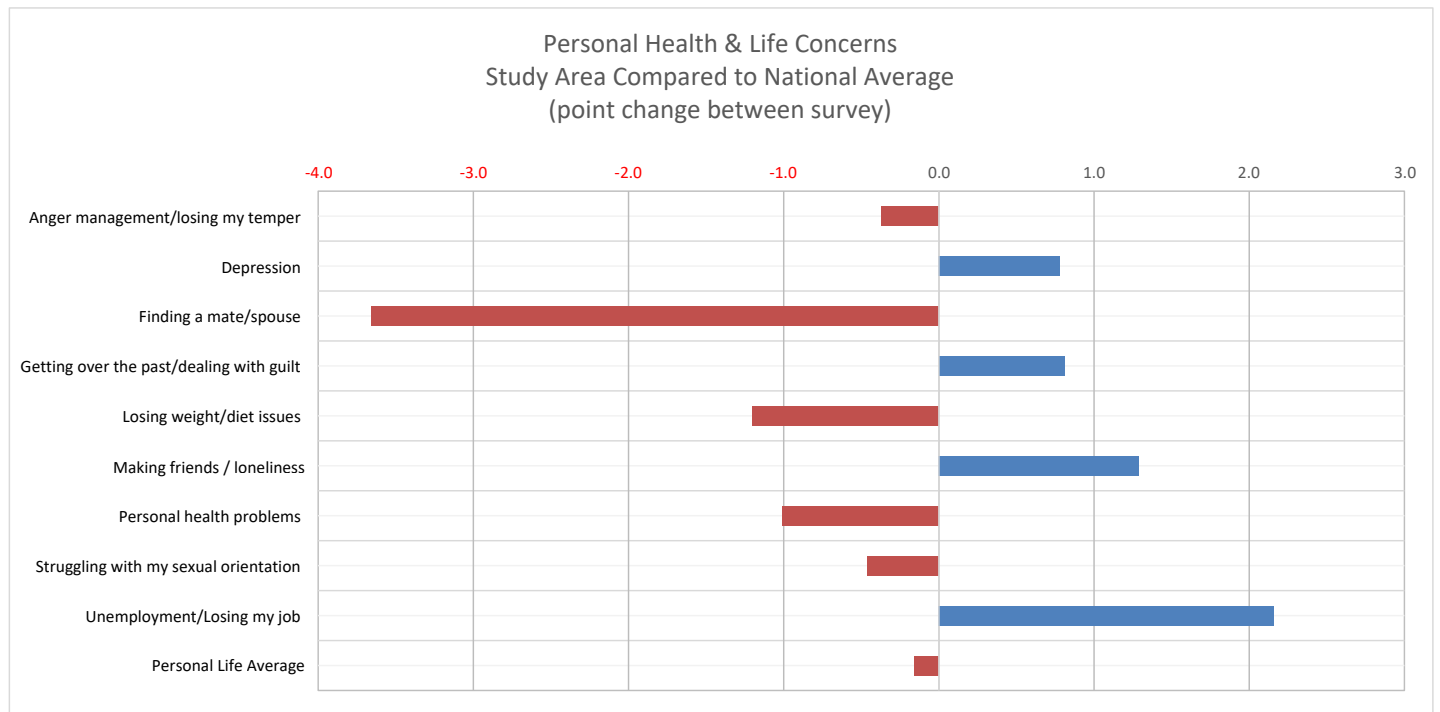
Concerns about Future Hopes and Possibilities

Study Area Compared to National Average	Study Area		National Average		Modest Concern	Significant Concern
	Modest Concern	Significant Concern	Modest Concern	Significant Concern		
Fear of the future or the unknown	49.6%	21.6%	50.5%	21.2%	98	102
Fulfilling marriage/romance & intimacy	31.9%	10.2%	31.3%	10.7%	102	95
Making the right choices/finding direction	45.6%	14.6%	45.2%	14.7%	101	100
Spiritual issues/religion	29.0%	8.6%	27.6%	9.2%	105	94
Future Hopes and Possibilities Average	39.0%	13.8%	38.7%	14.0%	101	99

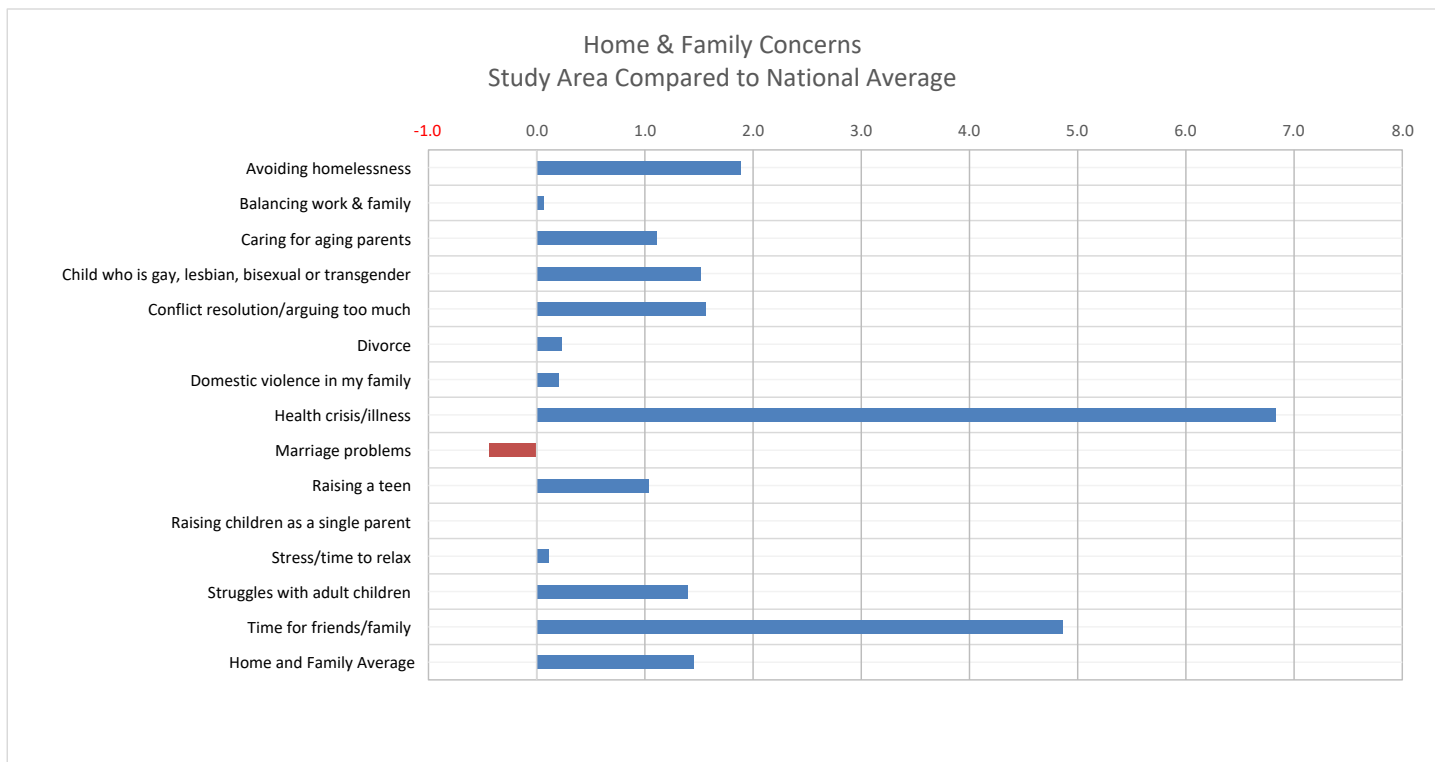


Concerns About Personal Health & Life

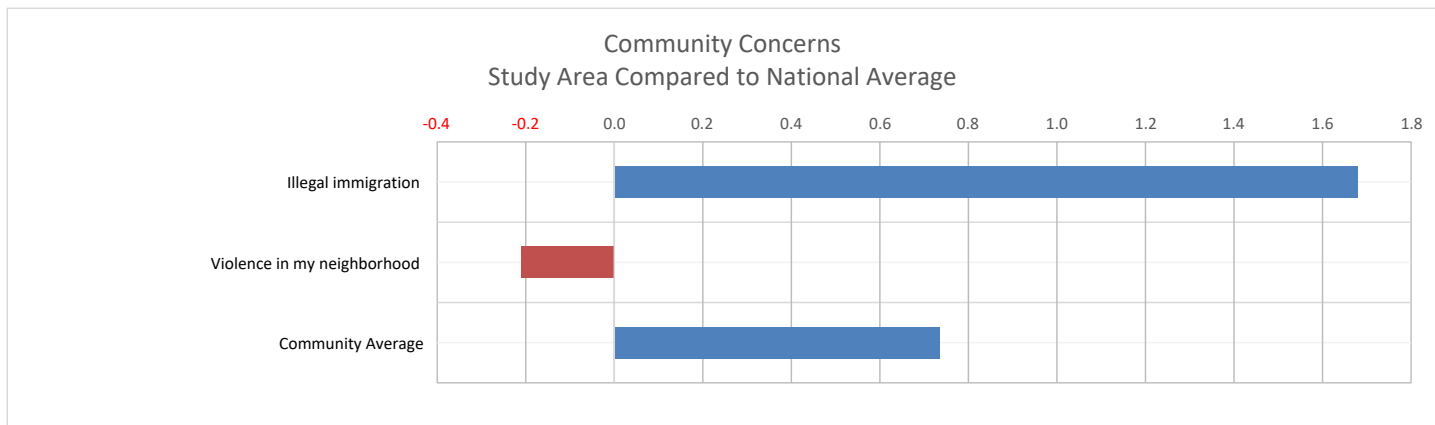
Study Area Comparison between 2017 & 2021	2017	2021	Point Change Between Surveys
Alcohol/drug abuse	5.1%	5.2%	0.1
Anger management/losing my temper	5.5%	5.2%	-0.4
Depression	12.2%	13.0%	0.8
Finding a mate/spouse	9.9%	6.2%	-3.7
Getting over the past/dealing with guilt	9.1%	9.9%	0.8
Losing weight/diet issues	19.9%	18.7%	-1.2
Making friends / loneliness	8.6%	9.9%	1.3
Personal health problems	16.4%	15.4%	-1.0
Struggling with my sexual orientation	2.5%	2.0%	-0.5
Unemployment/Losing my job	9.3%	11.4%	2.2
Personal Life Average	9.8%	9.7%	-0.2



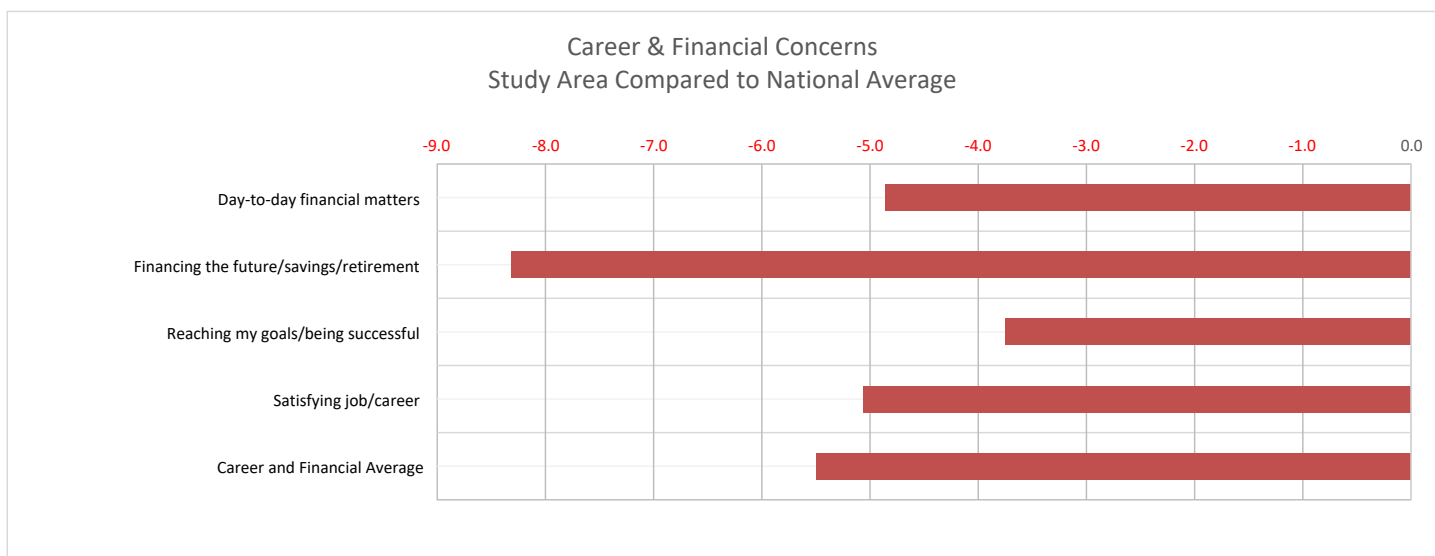
Study Area Comparison between 2017 & 2021	Concerns About Home and Family		
	2017	2021	Point Change Between Surveys
Avoiding homelessness	6.1%	7.9%	1.9
Balancing work & family	9.9%	9.9%	0.1
Caring for aging parents	13.2%	14.3%	1.1
Child who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender	3.2%	4.7%	1.5
Conflict resolution/arguing too much	6.2%	7.8%	1.6
Divorce	4.1%	4.3%	0.2
Domestic violence in my family	3.1%	3.3%	0.2
Health crisis/illness	14.6%	21.4%	6.8
Marriage problems	5.1%	4.7%	-0.4
Raising a teen	6.1%	7.1%	1.0
Raising children as a single parent	4.7%	4.7%	0.0
Stress/time to relax	15.7%	15.8%	0.1
Struggles with adult children	5.0%	6.4%	1.4
Time for friends/family	9.2%	14.1%	4.9
Home and Family Average	7.6%	9.0%	1.5



Concerns About Community			
Study Area Comparison between 2017 & 2021	2017	2021	Point Change Between Surveys
Illegal immigration	15.0%	16.7%	1.7
Violence in my neighborhood	7.2%	7.0%	-0.2
Community Average	11.1%	11.9%	0.7



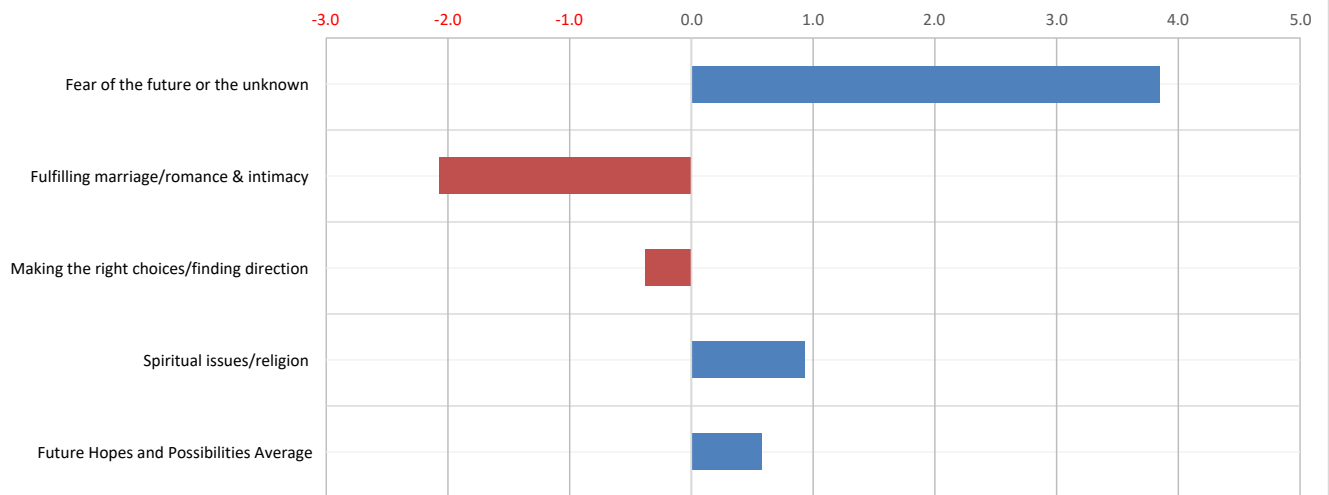
Concerns about Careers and Financial Matters			
Study Area Comparison between 2017 & 2021	2017	2021	Point Change Between Surveys
Day-to-day financial matters	19.7%	14.9%	-4.9
Financing the future/savings/retirement	29.4%	21.1%	-8.3
Reaching my goals/being successful	17.8%	14.1%	-3.8
Satisfying job/career	17.7%	12.6%	-5.1
Career and Financial Average	21.2%	15.7%	-5.5



Concerns about Future Hopes and Possibilities

Study Area Comparison between 2017 & 2021	2017	2021	Point Change Between Surveys
Fear of the future or the unknown	17.7%	21.6%	3.9
Fulfilling marriage/romance & intimacy	12.3%	10.2%	-2.1
Making the right choices/finding direction	15.0%	14.6%	-0.4
Spiritual issues/religion	7.7%	8.6%	0.9
Future Hopes and Possibilities Average	13.2%	13.8%	0.6

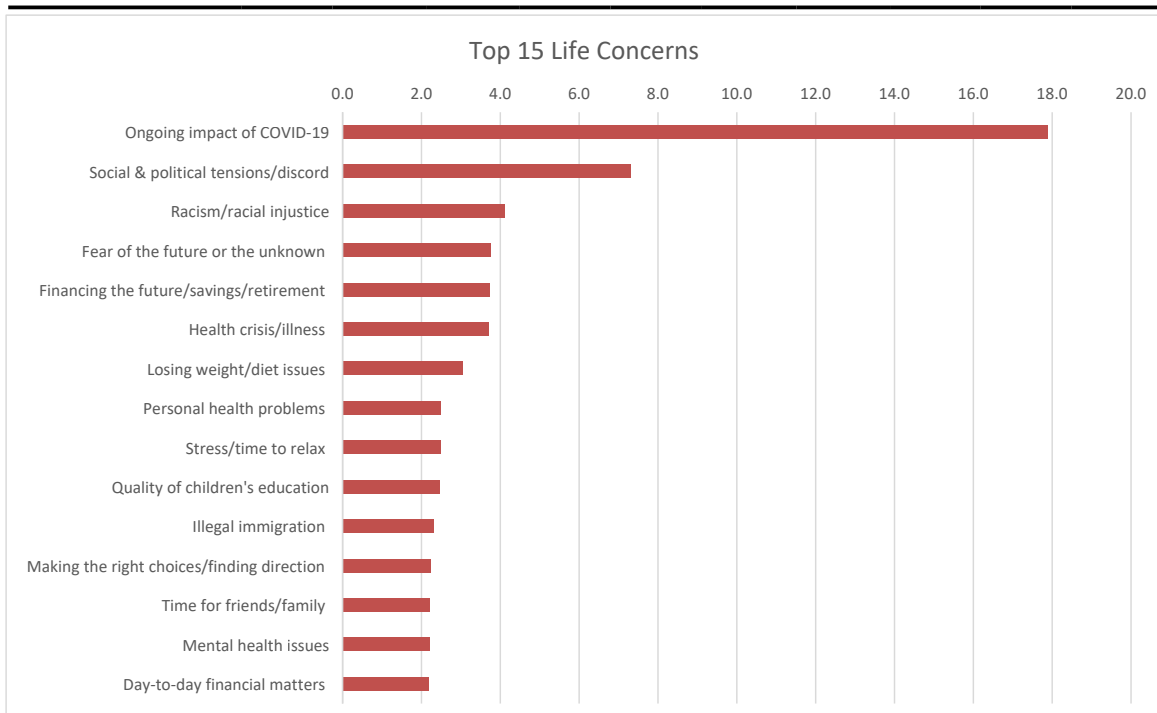
Future Hopes & Possibilities Concerns
Study Area Compared to National Average



If congregational ministries and programs intend to provide support and service to their communities, knowing the community's concerns is important.

This report analyzes Life Concerns data and displays the 15 highest concerns for your study area. You can use this to discuss ways to engage and serve your community.

Priority List	Top 15 of 44 Life Concerns			
	Ranked by greatest concerns			
Ranking	Concern	Ratio	Strength of Concern	
1	Ongoing impact of COVID-19	17.9	Very Strong Concern	
2	Social & political tensions/discord	7.3	Very Strong Concern	
3	Racism/racial injustice	4.1	Very Strong Concern	
4	Fear of the future or the unknown	3.7	Very Strong Concern	
5	Financing the future/savings/retirement	3.7	Very Strong Concern	
6	Health crisis/illness	3.7	Very Strong Concern	
7	Losing weight/diet issues	3.1	Very Strong Concern	
8	Personal health problems	2.5	Strong Concern	
9	Stress/time to relax	2.5	Strong Concern	
10	Quality of children's education	2.5	Strong Concern	
11	Illegal immigration	2.3	Strong Concern	
12	Making the right choices/finding direction	2.2	Strong Concern	
13	Time for friends/family	2.2	Strong Concern	
14	Mental health issues	2.2	Strong Concern	
15	Day-to-day financial matters	2.2	Strong Concern	



Reasons for Non-Participation—Those Outside of a Religious Congregation or Community

People have different reasons for not participating in a religious congregation or community. We look at this from two perspectives: those on the outside and those currently on the inside.

The Outside group indicated they are not currently participating in any religious community and gave reasons why they probably will not participate in a religious congregation or community. The Inside group reflects those who currently participate but have considered discontinuing their involvement.

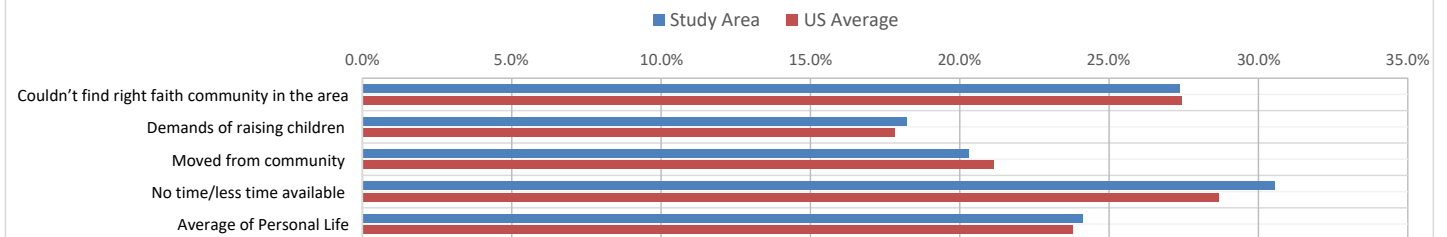
This data may be uncomfortable but important for congregations to consider if their mission is to connect with the community and maintain their congregations. The topics are segmented by themes: personal life, personal faith, and about the church. We compare each theme to the national average. At the end of this section, the top 10 reasons for not participating in a religious congregation or community display.

From Outside: Reasons for non-participation in a religious congregation or religious community

Study Area Compared to National Average

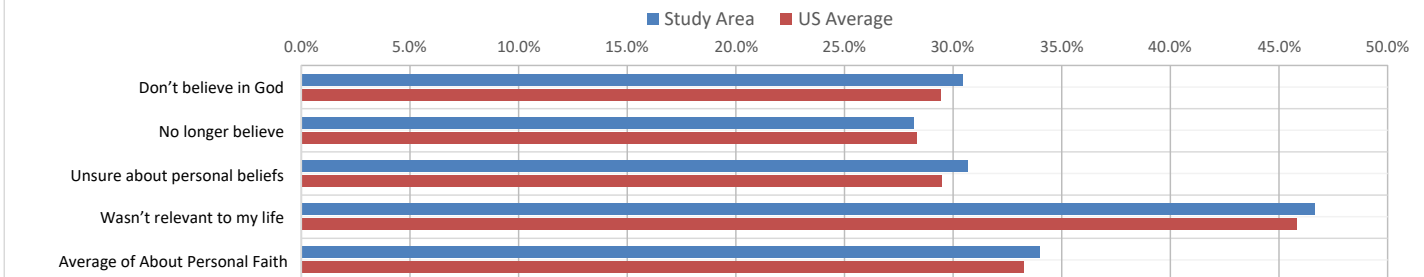
About Personal Life	Study Area	US Average	Comparative Index
Couldn't find right faith community in the area	27.4%	27.5%	100
Demands of raising children	18.2%	17.8%	102
Moved from community	20.3%	21.1%	96
No time/less time available	30.6%	28.7%	106
Average of Personal Life	24.1%	23.8%	101

Reasons About *Personal Life* for Non-participation in a Religious Congregation Compared to National Average



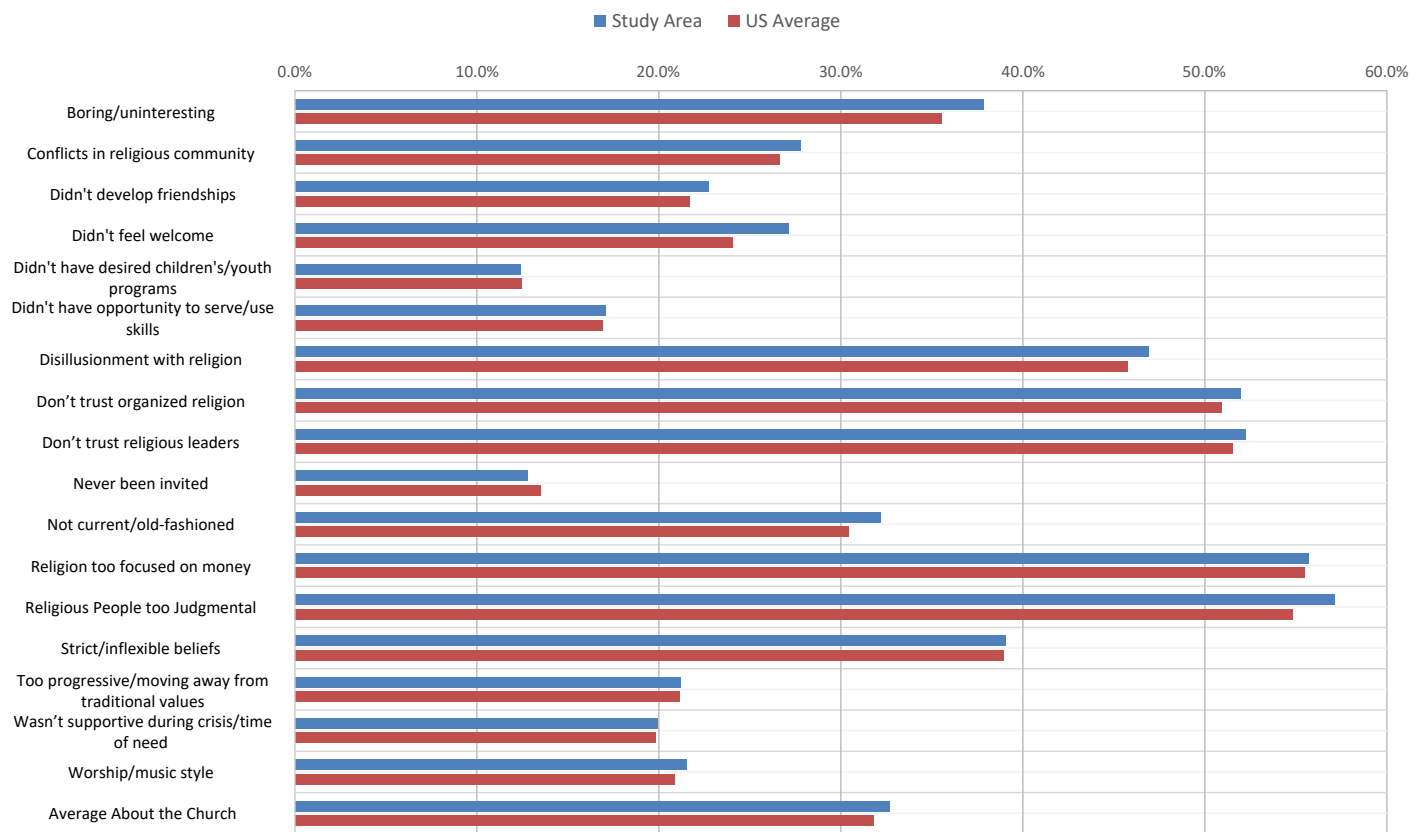
About Personal Faith	Study Area	US Average	Comparative Index
Don't believe in God	30.5%	29.4%	103
No longer believe	28.2%	28.4%	99
Unsure about personal beliefs	30.7%	29.5%	104
Wasn't relevant to my life	46.7%	45.8%	102
Average of About Personal Faith	34.0%	33.3%	102

Reasons About *Personal Faith* for Non-participation in a Religious Congregation Compared to National Average



About the Church	Study Area	US Average	Comparative Index
Boring/uninteresting	37.9%	35.6%	107
Conflicts in religious community	27.8%	26.7%	104
Didn't develop friendships	22.7%	21.7%	105
Didn't feel welcome	27.2%	24.0%	113
Didn't have desired children's/youth programs	12.4%	12.5%	100
Didn't have opportunity to serve/use skills	17.1%	16.9%	101
Disillusionment with religion	46.9%	45.8%	103
Don't trust organized religion	52.0%	50.9%	102
Don't trust religious leaders	52.3%	51.5%	101
Never been invited	12.8%	13.5%	95
Not current/old-fashioned	32.2%	30.4%	106
Religion too focused on money	55.7%	55.5%	100
Religious People too Judgmental	57.1%	54.8%	104
Strict/inflexible beliefs	39.0%	39.0%	100
Too progressive/moving away from traditional values	21.2%	21.1%	100
Wasn't supportive during crisis/time of need	20.0%	19.8%	101
Worship/music style	21.5%	20.9%	103
Average About the Church	32.7%	31.8%	103

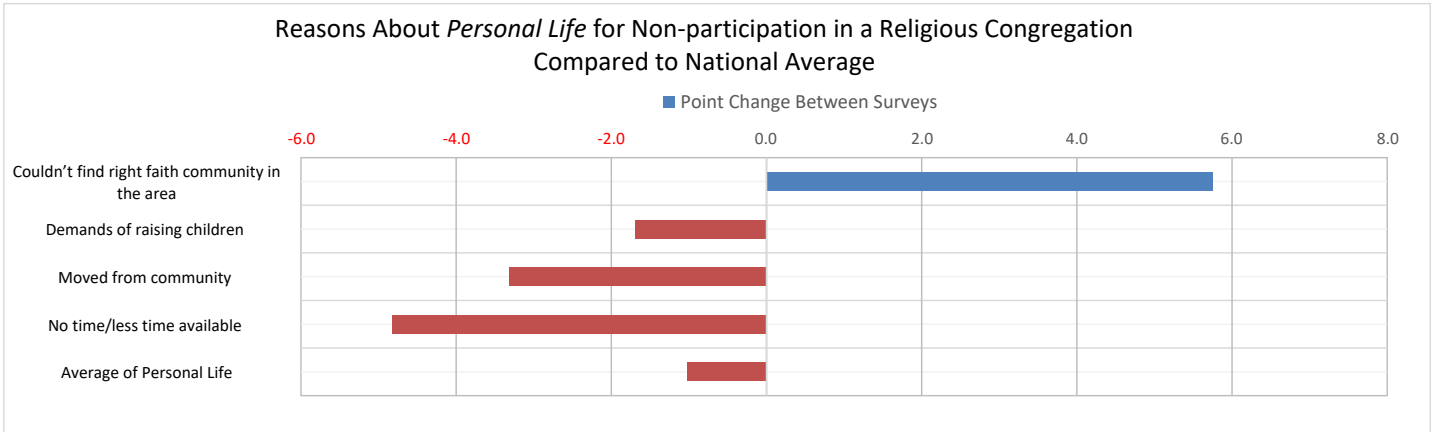
Reasons *About the Church* for Non-participation in a Religious Congregation Compared to National Average



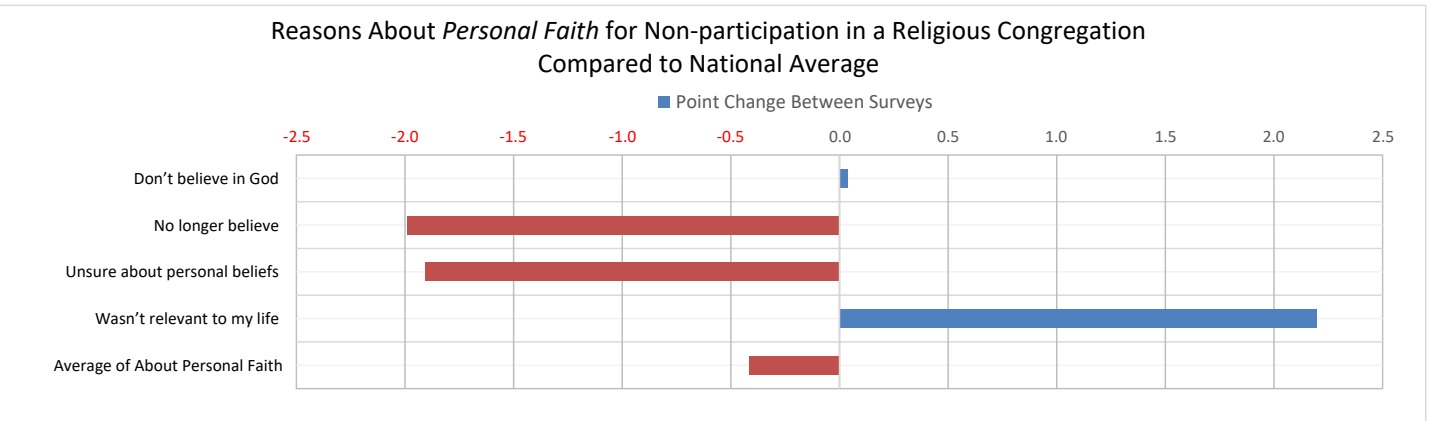
From Outside: Probable reasons for non-participation in a religious congregation or religious community

Study Area Comparison between 2017 & 2021

About Personal Life	2017	2021	Point Change Between Surveys
Couldn't find right faith community in the area	21.6%	27.4%	5.8
Demands of raising children	19.9%	18.2%	-1.7
Moved from community	23.6%	20.3%	-3.3
No time/less time available	35.4%	30.6%	-4.8
Average of Personal Life	25.1%	24.1%	-1.0



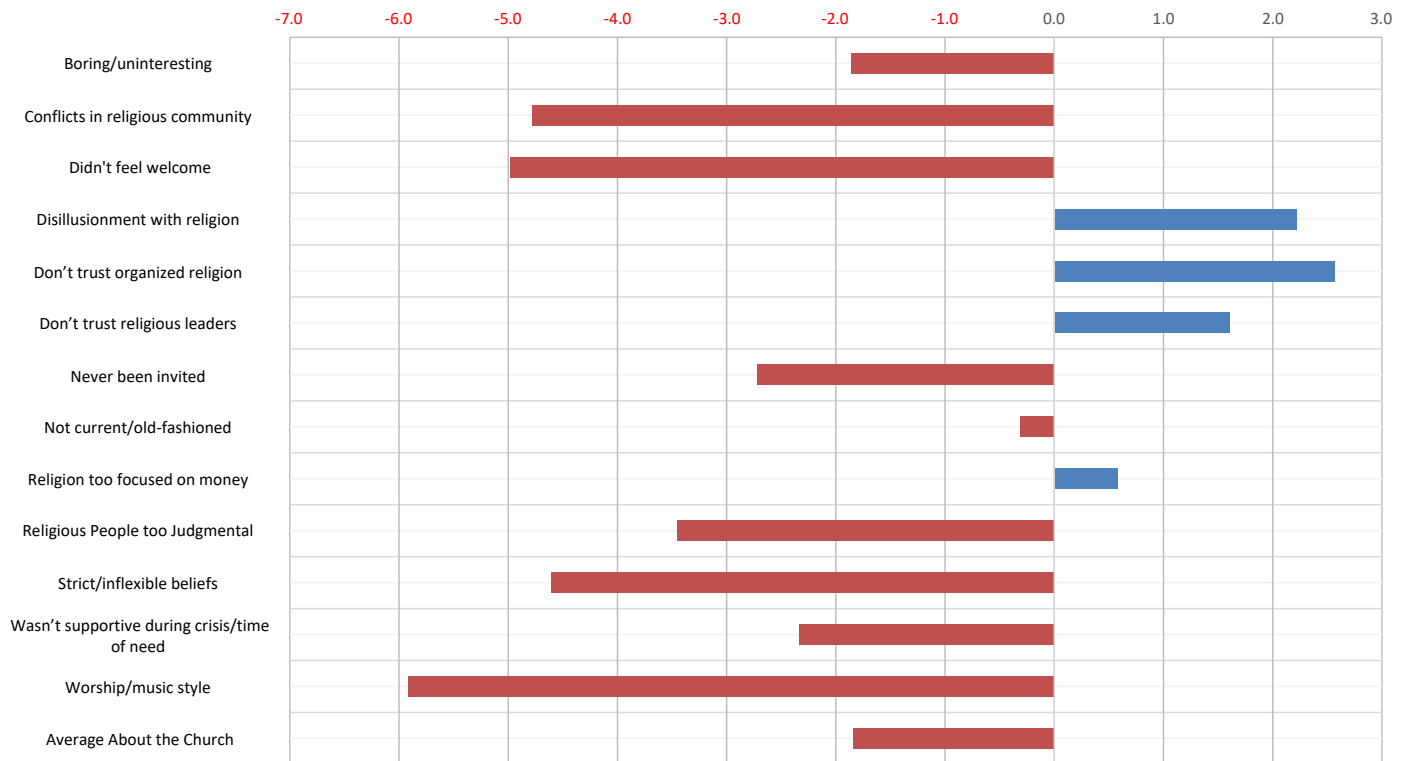
About Personal Faith	2017	2021	Point Change Between Surveys
Don't believe in God	30.4%	30.5%	0.0
No longer believe	30.2%	28.2%	-2.0
Unsure about personal beliefs	32.6%	30.7%	-1.9
Wasn't relevant to my life	44.5%	46.7%	2.2
Average of About Personal Faith	34.4%	34.0%	-0.4



About the Church	2017	2021	Point Change Between Surveys
Boring/uninteresting	39.7%	37.9%	-1.9
Conflicts in religious community	32.6%	27.8%	-4.8
Didn't feel welcome	32.1%	27.2%	-5.0
Disillusionment with religion	44.7%	46.9%	2.2
Don't trust organized religion	49.4%	52.0%	2.6
Don't trust religious leaders	50.6%	52.3%	1.6
Never been invited	15.5%	12.8%	-2.7
Not current/old-fashioned	32.5%	32.2%	-0.3
Religion too focused on money	55.1%	55.7%	0.6
Religious People too Judgmental	60.6%	57.1%	-3.5
Strict/inflexible beliefs	43.7%	39.0%	-4.6
Wasn't supportive during crisis/time of need	22.3%	20.0%	-2.3
Worship/music style	27.4%	21.5%	-5.9
Average About the Church	38.9%	37.1%	-1.8

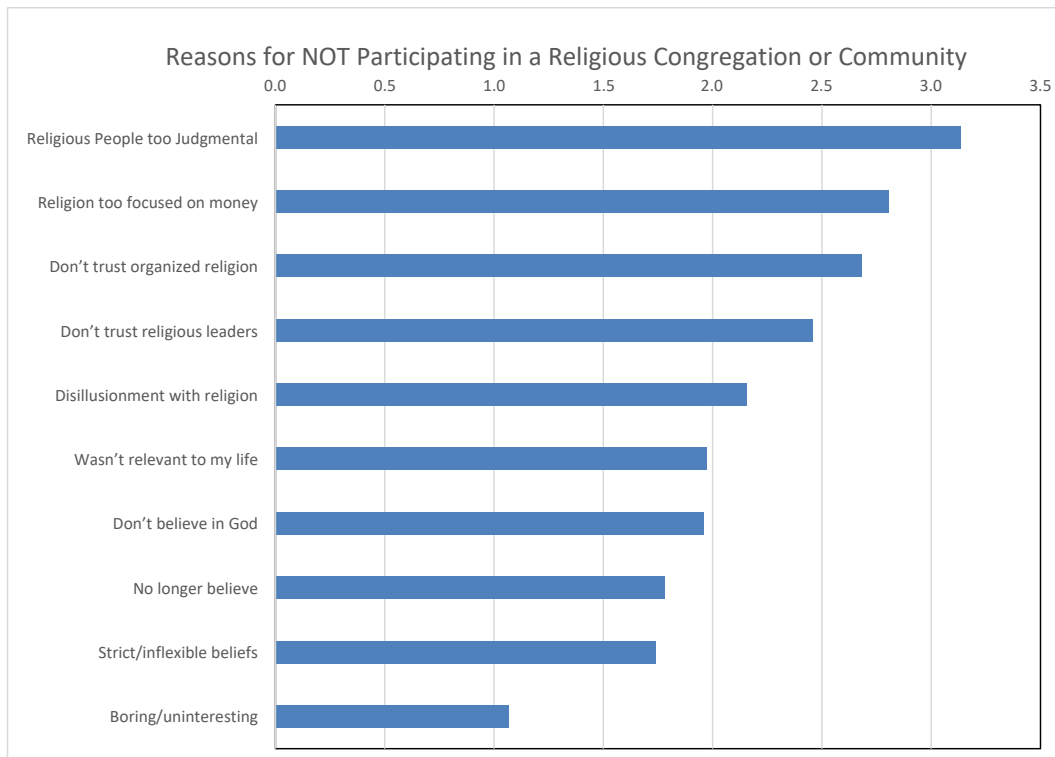
Reasons *About the Church* for Non-participation in a Religious Congregation Compared to National Average

■ Point Change Between Surveys



Top 10 of 25 Reasons for people outside a religious congregation or community for not participating

Ranking	Concern	Ratio	Strength of Reason
1	Religious People too Judgmental	3.1	Very Strong Reason
2	Religion too focused on money	2.8	Very Strong Reason
3	Don't trust organized religion	2.7	Very Strong Reason
4	Don't trust religious leaders	2.5	Very Strong Reason
5	Disillusionment with religion	2.2	Very Strong Reason
6	Wasn't relevant to my life	2.0	Very Strong Reason
7	Don't believe in God	2.0	Very Strong Reason
8	No longer believe	1.8	Very Strong Reason
9	Strict/inflexible beliefs	1.7	Somewhat Strong Reason
10	Boring/uninteresting	1.1	Somewhat Strong Reason



Reasons to Consider Non-Participation—Those Inside a Religious Congregation or Community

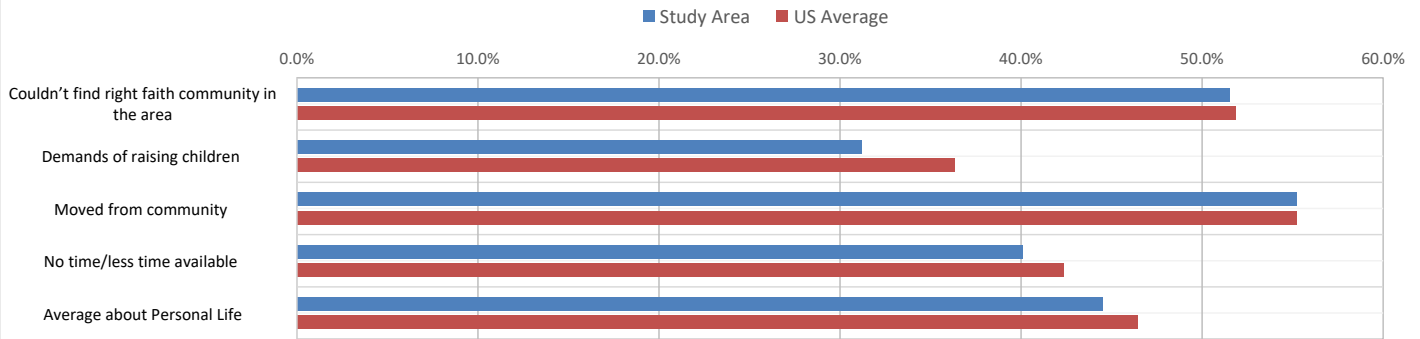
These respondents currently participate in a religious congregation or community but may consider discontinuing participation for some of the following reasons.

From the Inside: Reasons for considering non-participation in a religious congregation or religious community

Study Area Compared to National Average

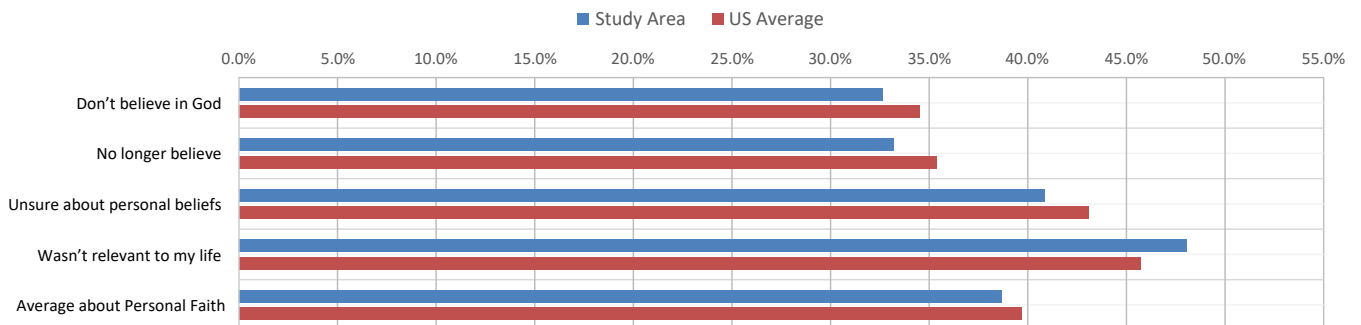
About Personal Life	Study Area	US Average	Comparative Index
Couldn't find right faith community in the area	51.5%	51.9%	99
Demands of raising children	31.2%	36.3%	86
Moved from community	55.2%	55.2%	100
No time/less time available	40.1%	42.4%	95
Average about Personal Life	44.5%	46.5%	96

Reasons About *Personal Life* for Considering Non-participation in a Religious Congregation Compared to National Average



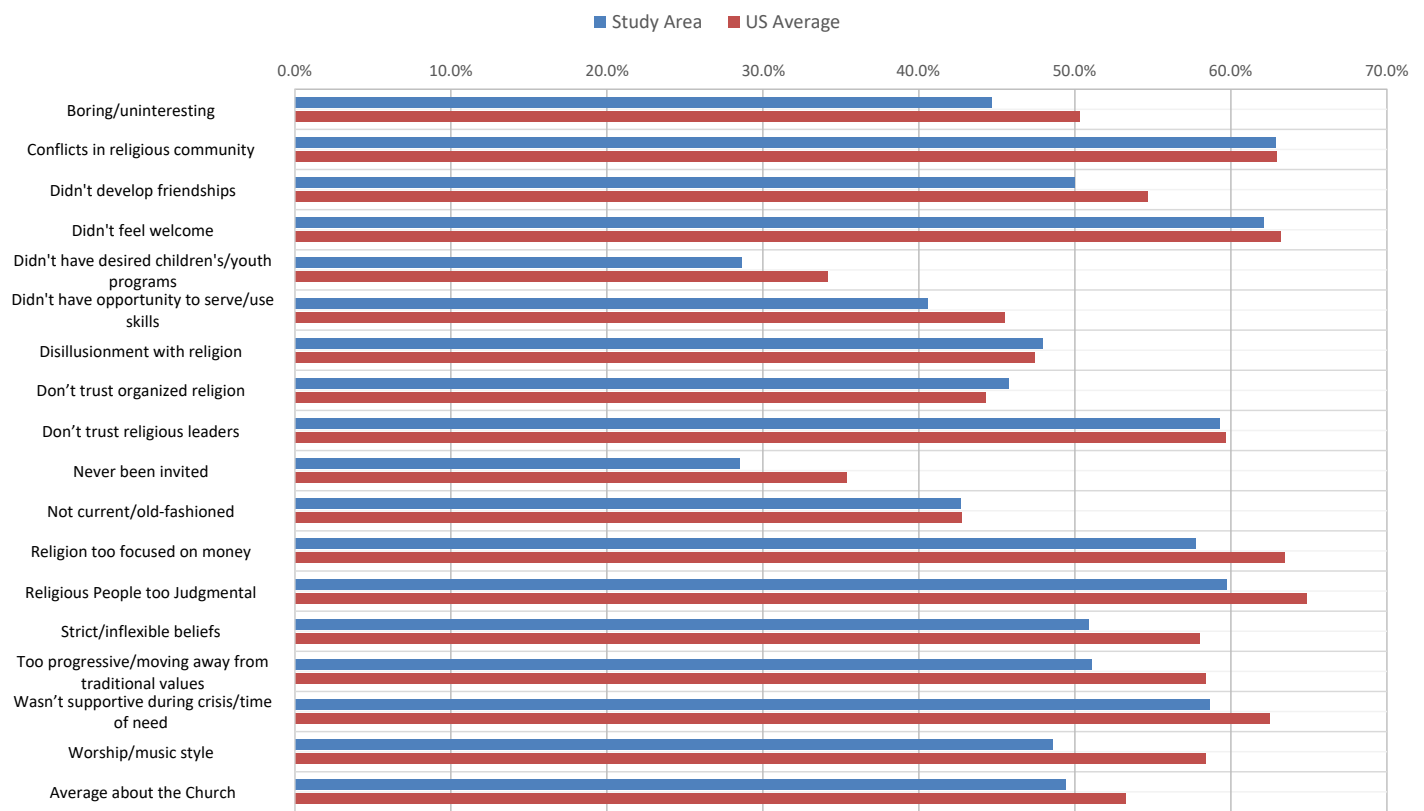
About Personal Faith	Study Area	US Average	Comparative Index
Don't believe in God	32.6%	34.5%	95
No longer believe	33.2%	35.4%	94
Unsure about personal beliefs	40.9%	43.1%	95
Wasn't relevant to my life	48.1%	45.7%	105
Average about Personal Faith	38.7%	39.7%	98

Reasons About *Personal Faith* for Considering Non-participation in a Religious Congregation Compared to National Average



About the Church	Study Area	US Average	Comparative Index
Boring/uninteresting	44.7%	50.3%	89
Conflicts in religious community	62.9%	62.9%	100
Didn't develop friendships	50.0%	54.6%	91
Didn't feel welcome	62.1%	63.2%	98
Didn't have desired children's/youth programs	28.7%	34.2%	84
Didn't have opportunity to serve/use skills	40.6%	45.5%	89
Disillusionment with religion	47.9%	47.4%	101
Don't trust organized religion	45.8%	44.3%	103
Don't trust religious leaders	59.3%	59.7%	99
Never been invited	28.5%	35.4%	81
Not current/old-fashioned	42.7%	42.7%	100
Religion too focused on money	57.8%	63.4%	91
Religious People too Judgmental	59.7%	64.9%	92
Strict/inflexible beliefs	50.9%	58.0%	88
Too progressive/moving away from traditional values	51.1%	58.4%	88
Wasn't supportive during crisis/time of need	58.6%	62.5%	94
Worship/music style	48.6%	58.4%	83
Average about the Church	49.4%	53.3%	93

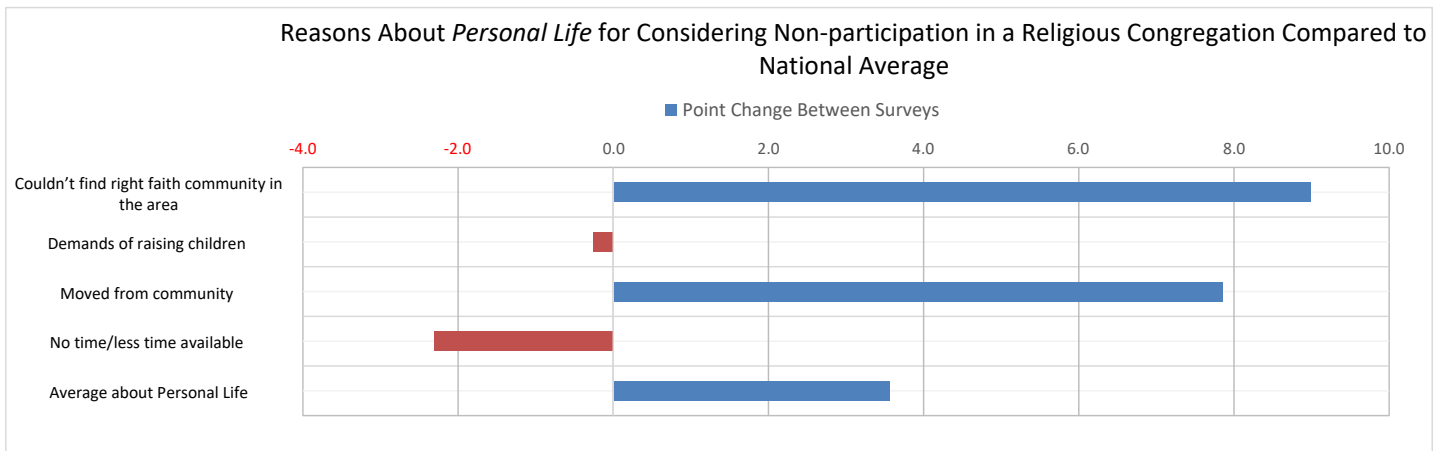
Reasons *About the Church* for Considering Non-participation in a Religious Congregation Compared to National Average



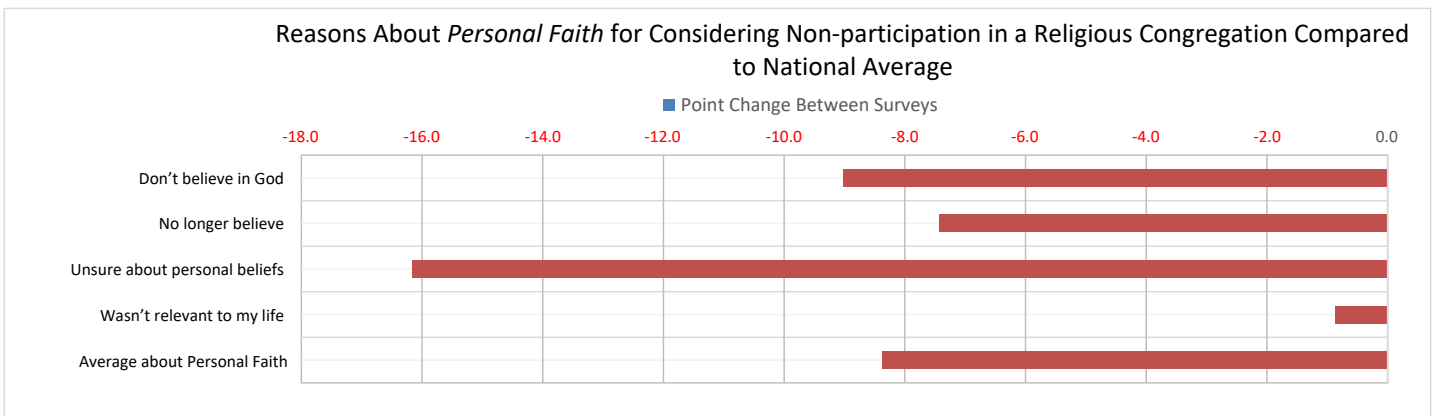
From the Inside: Reasons for considering non-participation in a religious congregation or religious community

Study Area Comparison between 2017 & 2021

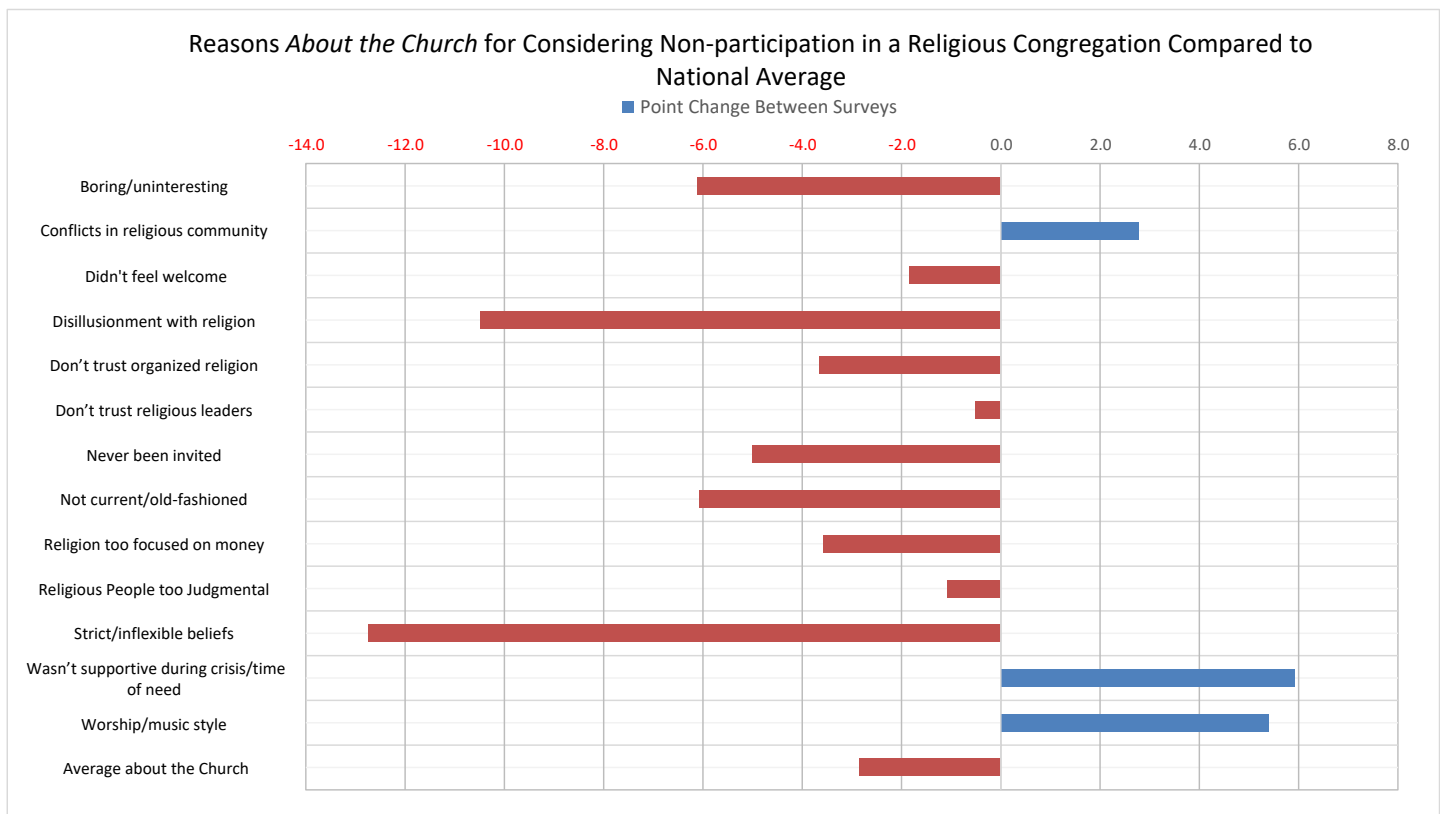
About Personal Life	2017	2021	Point Change Between Surveys
Couldn't find right faith community in the area	42.5%	51.5%	9.0
Demands of raising children	31.4%	31.2%	-0.3
Moved from community	47.3%	55.2%	7.9
No time/less time available	42.4%	40.1%	-2.3
Average about Personal Life	40.9%	44.5%	3.6



About Personal Faith	2017	2021	Point Change Between Surveys
Don't believe in God	41.7%	32.6%	-9.0
No longer believe	40.6%	33.2%	-7.4
Unsure about personal beliefs	57.0%	40.9%	-16.2
Wasn't relevant to my life	48.9%	48.1%	-0.9
Average about Personal Faith	47.1%	38.7%	-8.4

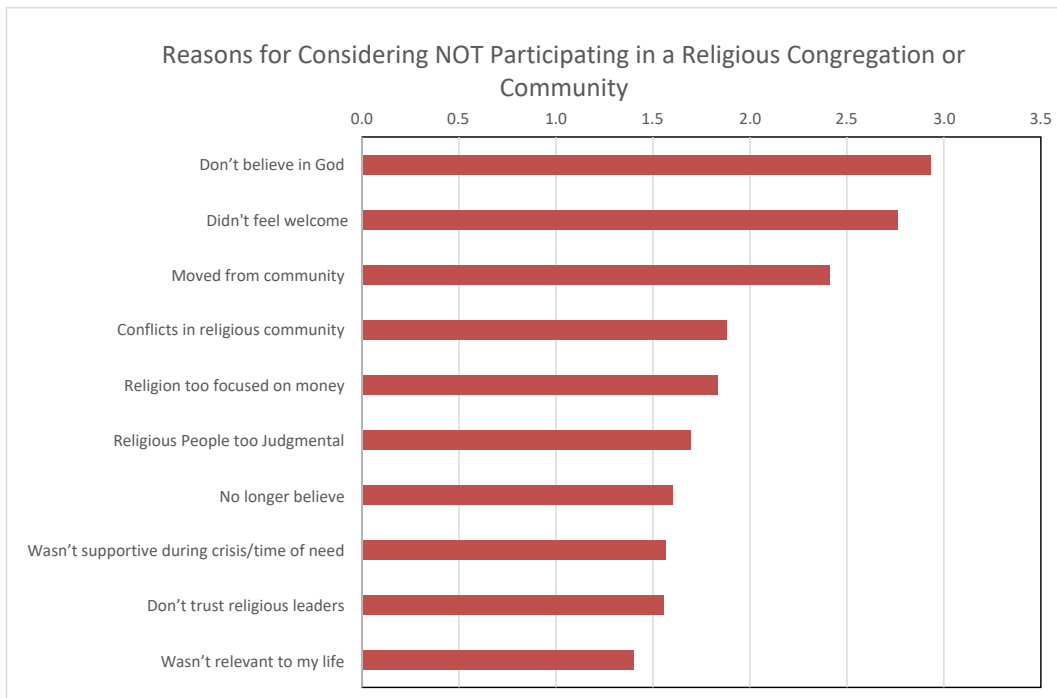


About the Church	2017	2021	Point Change Between Surveys
Boring/uninteresting	50.8%	44.7%	-6.1
Conflicts in religious community	60.1%	62.9%	2.8
Didn't feel welcome	63.9%	62.1%	-1.9
Disillusionment with religion	58.4%	47.9%	-10.5
Don't trust organized religion	49.4%	45.8%	-3.7
Don't trust religious leaders	59.8%	59.3%	-0.5
Never been invited	33.5%	28.5%	-5.0
Not current/old-fashioned	48.7%	42.7%	-6.1
Religion too focused on money	61.3%	57.8%	-3.6
Religious People too Judgmental	60.8%	59.7%	-1.1
Strict/inflexible beliefs	63.7%	50.9%	-12.8
Wasn't supportive during crisis/time of need	52.7%	58.6%	5.9
Worship/music style	43.2%	48.6%	5.4
Average about the Church	54.3%	51.5%	-2.8



Top 10 of 25 reasons for considering NOT participating in a religious congregation or community

Ranking	Concern	Ratio	Strength
1	Don't believe in God	2.9	Very Strong Reason
2	Didn't feel welcome	2.8	Very Strong Reason
3	Moved from community	2.4	Very Strong Reason
4	Conflicts in religious community	1.9	Very Strong Reason
5	Religion too focused on money	1.8	Very Strong Reason
6	Religious People too Judgmental	1.7	Somewhat Strong Reason
7	No longer believe	1.6	Somewhat Strong Reason
8	Wasn't supportive during crisis/time of need	1.6	Somewhat Strong Reason
9	Don't trust religious leaders	1.6	Somewhat Strong Reason
10	Wasn't relevant to my life	1.4	Somewhat Strong Reason



Program or Ministry Preferences

Different communities need different programs and services. Here are the programs and services this study area considers important compared to national averages. The Important category includes responses of Somewhat Important and Very Important. Other options include Slightly Important, Not Sure, and Not Important.

Study Area Compared to National Average	Study Area			US Average		Comparative Index	
	Not Important	Important	Ratio	Not Important	Important	Not Important	Very Important
Personal Growth							
Addiction support groups	51.7%	34.7%	0.7	51.1%	35.3%	101	98
Health/weight loss programs	54.8%	31.0%	0.6	55.1%	32.1%	99	97
Membership and leadership training	44.7%	41.3%	0.9	45.9%	41.1%	97	100
Opportunities to develop personal relationships	23.4%	65.9%	2.8	24.5%	65.8%	96	100
Practical training seminars (money management, computer skills, etc.)	45.7%	41.3%	0.9	45.4%	42.4%	101	97
Personal Growth	44.1%	42.8%	1.0	44.4%	43.3%	99	99
Family Support and Intervention Services							
Daycare/After-School Programs	56.8%	28.4%	0.5	59.0%	26.6%	96	107
Crisis support groups	36.3%	51.0%	1.4	37.0%	50.8%	98	100
Family oriented activities	30.2%	59.3%	2.0	33.4%	56.6%	90	105
Marriage enrichment	43.1%	43.2%	1.0	45.2%	41.8%	95	103
Parenting development	50.2%	34.3%	0.7	53.2%	33.0%	94	104
Personal/family counseling	39.6%	47.8%	1.2	40.6%	47.8%	98	100
Family Support and Intervention Services	42.7%	44.0%	1.0	44.7%	42.8%	95	103
Community Involvement and Advocacy Programs							
Adult social activities	23.2%	66.6%	2.9	26.1%	64.3%	89	104
Involvement in social causes	28.5%	60.0%	2.1	30.0%	58.9%	95	102
Mission trips and global outreach	46.9%	39.6%	0.8	47.7%	38.5%	98	103
Opportunities for volunteering in the community	23.3%	66.2%	2.8	25.9%	64.1%	90	103
Social justice advocacy work	35.8%	49.8%	1.4	38.5%	48.4%	93	103
Community Involvement and Advocacy Programs	31.5%	56.4%	1.8	33.6%	54.8%	94	103

Community Activities or Cultural Programs	Not Important	Important	Ratio	Not Important	Important	Not Important	Very Important
Cultural programs (music, drama, art)	36.1%	51.5%	1.4	36.4%	52.7%	99	98
Holiday programs/activities	23.6%	66.3%	2.8	25.0%	65.4%	94	101
Seniors/retiree activities	31.9%	56.5%	1.8	30.6%	58.7%	104	96
Singles or college-age groups	51.8%	33.4%	0.6	53.9%	31.9%	96	105
Size of church congregation	38.4%	50.2%	1.3	41.8%	47.6%	92	106
Small groups (i.e., life groups, personal interest groups)	31.2%	57.5%	1.8	31.8%	57.4%	98	100
Youth social activities	43.9%	43.0%	1.0	47.9%	39.7%	92	108
Community Activities or Cultural Programs	36.7%	51.2%	1.4	38.2%	50.5%	96	101
Religious/Spiritual Programs	Not Important	Important	Ratio	Not Important	Important	Not Important	Very Important
Bible or Scripture study/prayer groups	39.0%	48.9%	1.3	41.5%	47.2%	94	104
Celebration of sacraments	28.4%	57.9%	2.0	32.8%	53.5%	86	108
Contemporary worship experiences	34.3%	53.1%	1.5	35.9%	51.3%	95	103
Online or virtual worship experiences	36.1%	50.7%	1.4	40.0%	47.9%	90	106
Quality sermons	8.5%	36.5%	4.3	20.7%	69.6%	41	52
Religious education for children	39.9%	47.3%	1.2	42.8%	44.6%	93	106
Spiritual discussion groups	36.4%	51.9%	1.4	38.1%	50.1%	96	104
Traditional worship experiences	24.9%	64.9%	2.6	26.7%	63.4%	93	102
Warm and friendly encounters	10.8%	81.2%	7.5	12.3%	79.9%	87	102
Religious/Spiritual Programs	28.7%	54.7%	1.9	32.3%	56.4%	89	97

You can interpret program and ministry data in three ways.

First, look at how the study area compares to the national average. This indicates if your area needs this program..

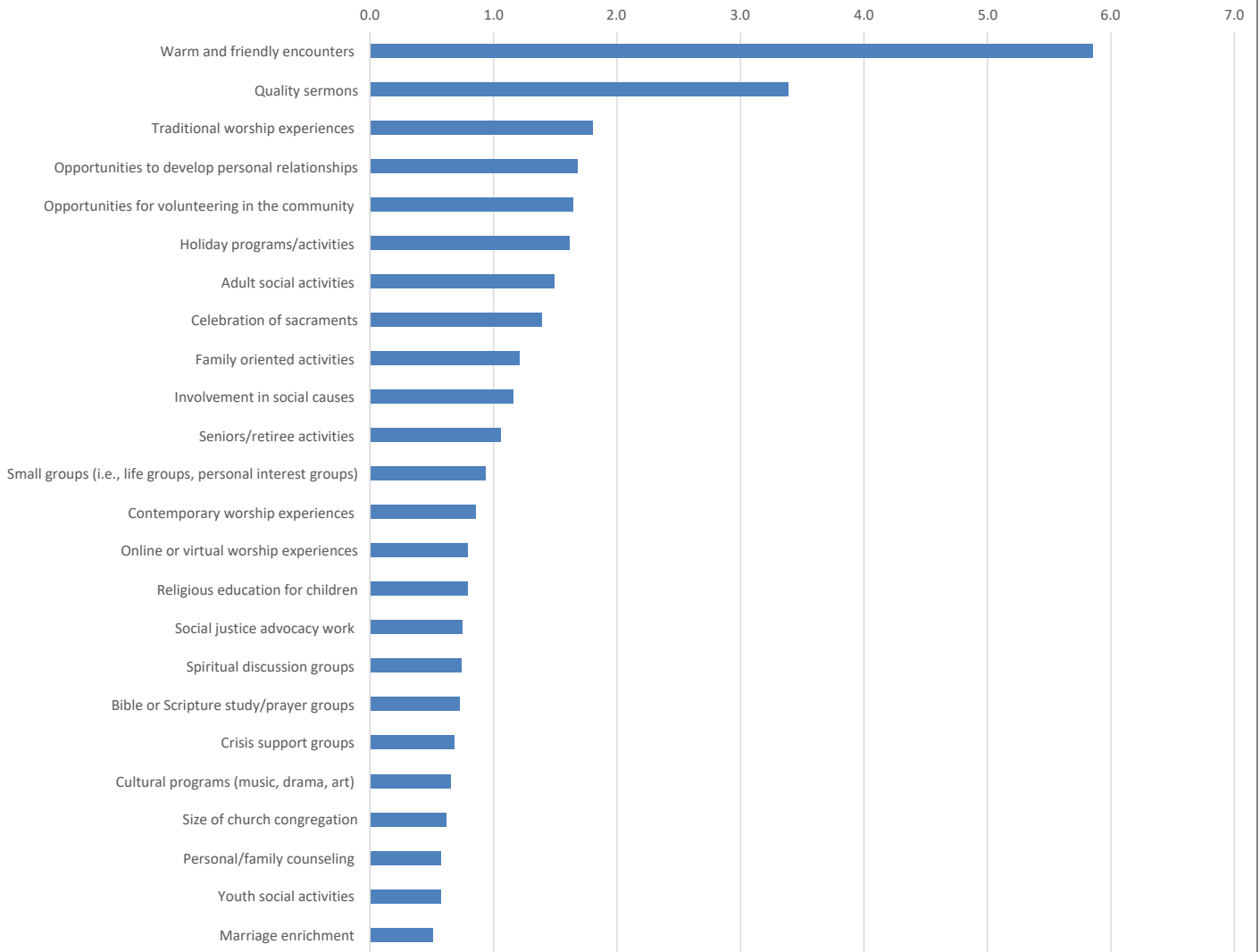
Second, consider the Important percentage. If the percentage is above 20%, your study's population would likely benefit from that particular program.

Third, look at the ratio. The ratio is calculated by dividing the Important by the Not Important responses. The higher the number, the stronger the desire for that program, especially if a program has a ratio of "1" or higher.

This table displays how program preferences for this study area rank according to their ratio.

Priority List	Ministry or Program Recommendations Based Upon This Study Area			
	Preferences are ranked by ratio of important to not important			
	Ranking	Program	Ratio	Strength of Preference
	1	Warm and friendly encounters	5.9	Very Strong Preference
	2	Quality sermons	3.4	Very Strong Preference
	3	Traditional worship experiences	1.8	Strong Preference
	4	Opportunities to develop personal relationships	1.7	Strong Preference
	5	Opportunities for volunteering in the community	1.6	Strong Preference
	6	Holiday programs/activities	1.6	Strong Preference
	7	Adult social activities	1.5	Moderately Strong Preference
	8	Celebration of sacraments	1.4	Moderately Strong Preference
	9	Family oriented activities	1.2	Moderately Strong Preference
	10	Involvement in social causes	1.2	Moderately Strong Preference
	11	Seniors/retiree activities	1.1	Moderately Strong Preference
	12	Small groups (i.e., life groups, personal interest groups)	0.9	Minimal Preference
	13	Contemporary worship experiences	0.9	Minimal Preference
	14	Online or virtual worship experiences	0.8	Minimal Preference
	15	Religious education for children	0.8	Minimal Preference
	16	Social justice advocacy work	0.7	Minimal Preference
	17	Spiritual discussion groups	0.7	Minimal Preference
	18	Bible or Scripture study/prayer groups	0.7	Minimal Preference
	19	Crisis support groups	0.7	Minimal Preference
	20	Cultural programs (music, drama, art)	0.7	Minimal Preference
	21	Size of church congregation	0.6	Minimal Preference
	22	Personal/family counseling	0.6	Minimal Preference
	23	Youth social activities	0.6	Minimal Preference
	24	Marriage enrichment	0.5	Minimal Preference

Program Preferences Ranked by Ratio



Information Sources and Social Media Preferences

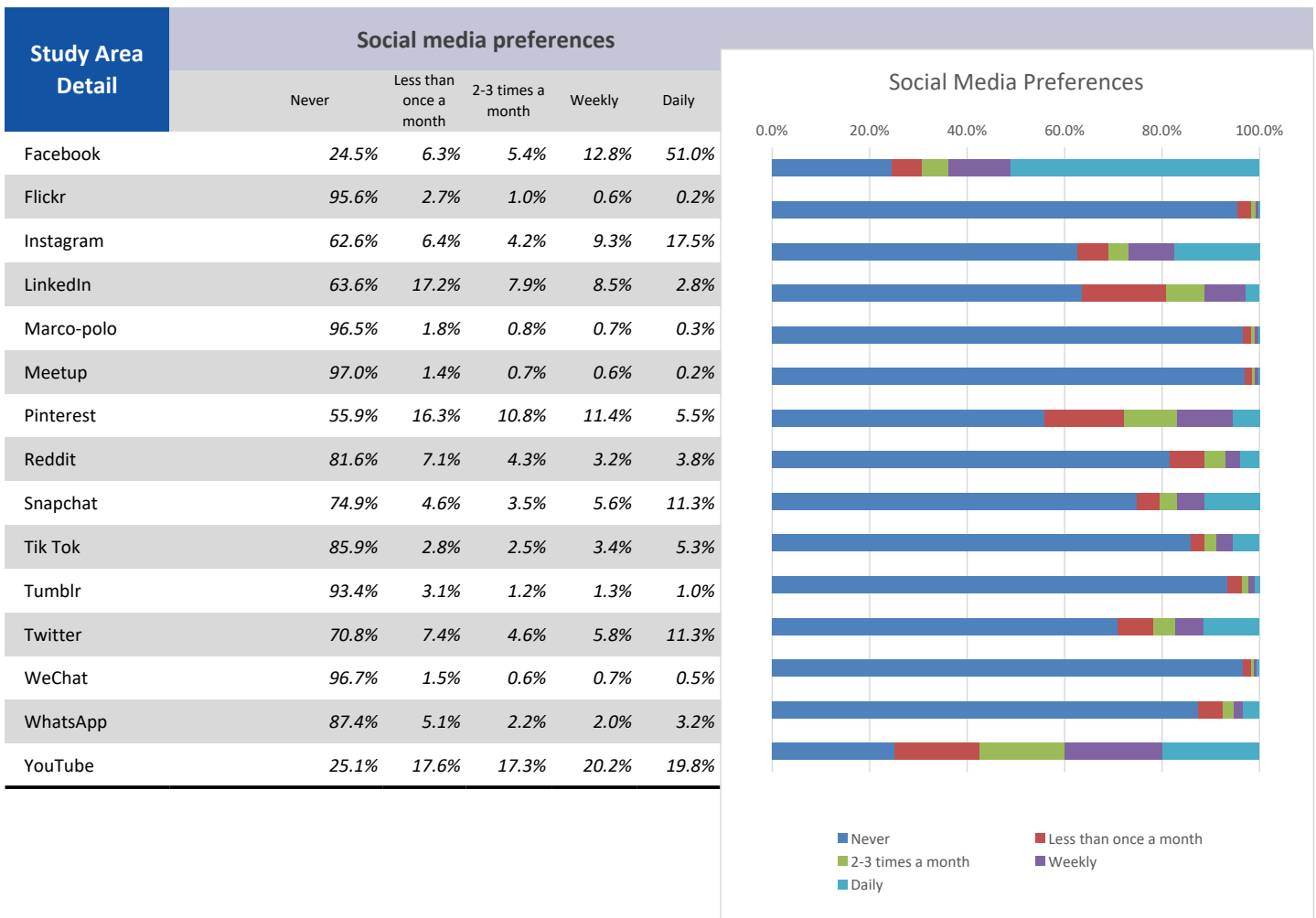
Media options for obtaining information today have exploded. The days of a few sources, such as major newspapers or network news programs have been replaced with multiple cable news networks, online news outlets, and social media sources.

To help people sort through this mass of media options, the study asked respondents to indicate their preferences in a series of "forced pairs". The data reveals which sources of information this area prefers, so you can identify the best channels for reaching the intended audience.

Study Area Detail	Media Preferences: Forced Pairs					
	Prefer this	Media Category	OR		Media Category	Prefer this
Blogs	6	18.9%	81.1%	4	Major Newspapers (e.g. LA Times, NY Times, Washington Post)	
Cable News (e.g. CNN, Fox News)	1	34.6%	65.4%	5	Network News (ABC, NBC, CBS)	
CNN Online News	3	55.0%	45.0%	3	Yahoo News	
CNN Online News	3	52.2%	47.8%	1	Fox News	
Facebook	6	25.2%	74.8%	1	Cable News (e.g. CNN, Fox News)	
Facebook	6	70.1%	30.0%	6	Twitter	
Fox News	1	56.2%	43.8%	6	Facebook	
Fox News	1	32.1%	67.9%	2	Television News (Network OR Cable)	
Huffington Post	3	49.0%	51.0%	1	Fox News	
Huffington Post	3	46.3%	53.8%	3	Yahoo News	
Major Newspapers (e.g. LA Times, NY Times, Washington Post)	4	33.8%	66.2%	2	Television News (Network OR Cable)	
Online News (e.g. Yahoo, Google, CNN, Fox, Huffington Post)	3	51.7%	48.3%	4	Major Newspapers (e.g. LA Times, NY Times, Washington Post)	
Twitter	6	13.9%	86.1%	2	Television News (Network OR Cable)	
USA Today	4	37.1%	62.9%	1	Cable News (e.g. CNN, Fox News)	
USA Today	4	27.7%	72.3%	2	Television News (Network OR Cable)	
Yahoo News	3	44.5%	55.5%	1	CNN Television News	

Key to Media Types	
1	Cable News
2	Television News (Network or Cable)
3	Online News
4	Major Newspapers
5	Major Network News Only (ABC, NBC, CBS)
6	Social Media

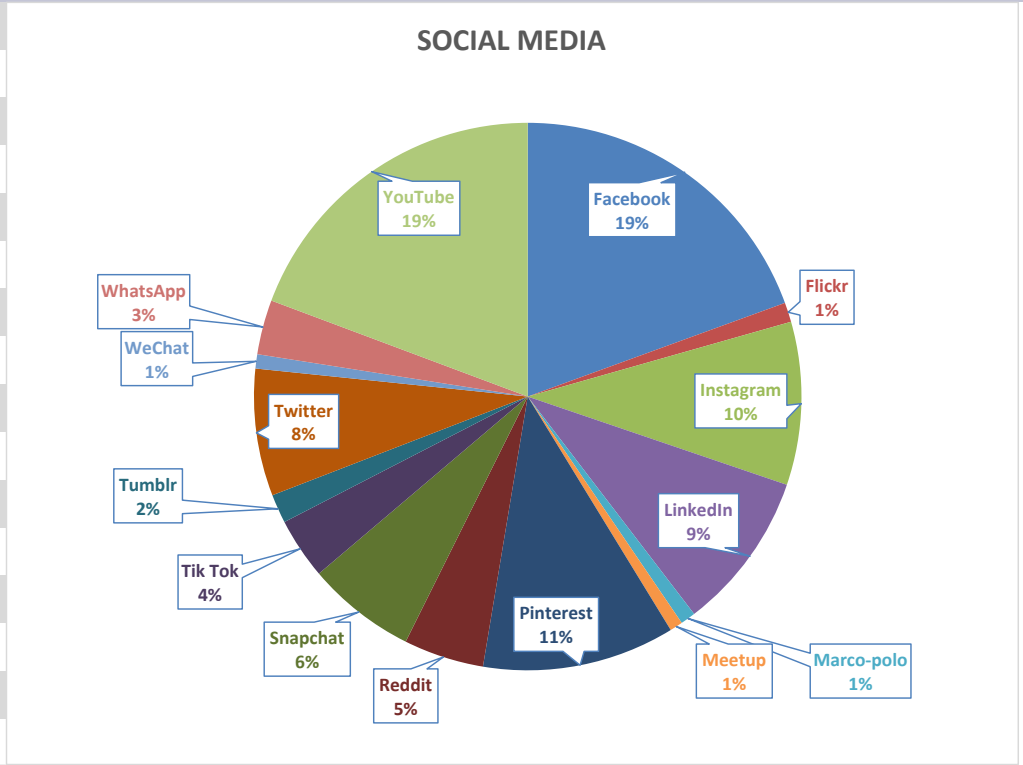
Rank Order	Weighted Ranking
1	Television News (Network or Cable)
2	Cable News
3	Major Newspapers
4	Online News
5	Major Network News Only (ABC, NBC, CBS)
6	Social Media



Priority List

Category of Media by Popular Use & Ranked Order

Rank Order	Media
1	Facebook
2	YouTube
3	Pinterest
4	Instagram
5	LinkedIn
6	Twitter
7	Snapchat
8	Reddit
9	Tik Tok
10	WhatsApp
11	Tumblr
12	Flickr
13	Marco-polo
14	WeChat
15	Meetup



Supporting Information

Interpreting the Report

The American Beliefs Study reports help you interpret data at a glance.

Comparative Indexes: All variables have a column called Comparative Index, which compares your study area with a larger area. For this report, all comparisons are with the national averages for the data item.

- Indexes of 100 mean the study area variable is the same as its base area.
- Indexes greater than 100 mean the study area variable is above the base area. The higher the number, the greater it is above the base.
- Indexes less than 100 mean the study area variable is below the base area. The lower the number, the greater it is below the base.

Ratio: Calculated using Somewhat Agree + Strongly Agree divided by Somewhat Disagree + Strongly Disagree

Color Coding: The Comparative Indexes columns are color coded so you can easily spot changes and the direction of change.

Index: Above Ave Ave Below Ave.

Support

If you need support, email us at misupport@acst.com or call 1-877-230-3212.

January 18, 2023

Re: United Church of Christ, 1st Congregational Letter of Reference

Our family moved to Crete, NE the summer of 2015. We were searching for a church to worship that would be welcoming and have a vibrant membership, including younger children the same age as our three children. We were quickly referred to the UCC by coworkers and we started attending. Unfortunately, we moved away from Crete the summer of 2020 so no longer attend, however we greatly miss the Church and the Church Community.

The UCC has many areas of strength, including their diverse membership, the large number of youths that attend and the corresponding programs (Children's Choir, Children's Ministry), their welcoming members, and their involvement in the community. They do a fantastic job of ministering inside the four walls of the church; however they go above and beyond to minister outside the walls as well, which makes the UCC stand out amongst others. Their participation in the Backpack program, the Family meals on Wednesday, and their partnerships with the businesses in town all indicate their commitment to spreading the Word and the Mission.

While unable to pinpoint a specific significant experience, our time with the UCC will always be remembered fondly. Our family greatly appreciated the Church membership welcoming us in, getting to know our Children and integrating us into the Church with open arms, even though we were not members.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to provide this letter of reference. Please feel free to contact me via phone if you wish to discuss further. My number is 308-830-3908.

Sincerely,



Rebekah Mussman

**Reference for UCC First Congregational - Crete, Nebraska
January 2023**

People of the congregation volunteer both to help the church as well as the community. Several members are involved in community projects.

From 1977 until January of 1989 I was pastor of the congregation. After moving to other ministries, I retired in 2004, returning to Crete and membership in the congregation. We moved away in mid 2017, transferring memberships at that time. While I visit occasionally, my active membership is with a UCC congregation in Lincoln, Nebraska where I now live.

Areas of strength in the UCC-Crete's ministry.

Providing availability of a street level meeting room/fellowship hall to the community is one of the strengths of the congregation. Over the years, the congregation has offered use of that space for emergencies as well as for non-profits. As there have been community needs for classroom instruction spaces for various educational classes, the congregation has made room available. The church has made space and time available to a children's food assistance program (Back Pack). While the church is the place where items are stored, folks from both the congregation and the entire community volunteer to fill and distribute the back packs.

The congregation's music and Christian education programs have been real strength as well. Educationally, topics of faith, prayer and scripture are taught and made available to church and community. The music director teaches vocal and instrumental music that is, of course, a part of worship. I know of ukulele, rhythm and handbell instruments being used.

Over the life of the congregation, there has been a close relationship with Doane University, a UCC related school. Often, over the years, people of the church have worked at Doane, of course faculty, staff and students of the university have been active in the life of the church. I have always seen that as a strength for both the church and the school.

Areas for improvement in the UCC-Crete's ministry.

At this point, I am not aware of areas of improvement in the ministry of the congregation.

Sincerely,

Wayne Schupbach
UCC Pastor, Retired



January 9, 2023

Dear Pastoral Search Committee:

It has been my pleasure to work with the Crete United Church of Christ to serve the community of Crete for over ten years. During that time, our programs at Crete Public Schools and I have provided various services and assistance to thousands of individuals and hundreds of families. The Crete UCC has been a shining example of how public and faith-based organizations can work together to make communities stronger and more resilient. Whether facing hunger, poverty, racism, illiteracy, or unemployment we have always been able to count on the Crete UCC to take a leading role in the community to advocate for those unable to speak for themselves and to provide a place where life-changing programming and resources were available.

An important example of our close collaboration with Crete UCC is the church providing a space where we deliver adult education services such as ESL, Adult Basic Education, GED[®] and citizenship preparation, as well as Family Literacy programming. A major contribution from the church has been its assistance in facilitating childcare, without which our parents would be unable to take advantage of these classes. We have also worked together to cook and serve community meals, host job/career fairs, and distribute Feeding America food to the neediest families in the area. Together, we have also worked to identify and problem-solve issues facing the Crete community such as welcoming and inclusion, immigration, housing, and food security.

These have been the result of intentional and extensive communication and collaboration between the Church, our programs inside Crete Public Schools, and others. The Crete UCC is more than just a place of worship. It is a crucial institution in the community. As you search for a future leader, I believe it is essential to understand the role the church has in the community and seek a leader that values this role and is willing to shoulder the responsibilities that come with it.

It is important to help the potential pastors understand that the leader of the Crete UCC provides more than just spiritual support to the members. Due to the role the church has in the community, its leaders also play an important role outside the church walls. While this may not seem like the traditional role of a pastor, it is what has made the Crete UCC what it is today and helped it continue to grow and prosper as other places of worship have declined.

Crete is a growing community with a diverse population of amazing, welcoming people. The UCC has played a significant role in making Crete what it is today and setting us up for success in the future. I have been blessed to call Crete my home for over 18 years. Part of the reason I have stayed is that there are organizations, like the UCC, that make Crete a special place to live. I would be happy to discuss our ongoing collaboration with the UCC and the community. Please feel free to reach out to me using the contact information below.

Most sincerely,

Ryan Hinz

Ryan Hinz, Adult Education Coordinator
(402) 826-7897
ryan.hinz@creteschools.org

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