



First Congregational

United Church of Christ

1126 SW PARK AVENUE
PORTLAND, OREGON



LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

JULY 2023

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Portland, Oregon

Rev. Brigitta Remole, Designated Term Interim

Central Pacific Conference

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)*

1. POSITION POSTING

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Portland, Oregon

Rev. Brigitta Remole, Designated Term Interim

Central Pacific Conference

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)*

1. POSITION POSTING

1a. LISTING INFORMATION

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

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

Mailing address: 1137 SW Broadway, Portland OR, 97205

Supplemental web links: www.uccportland.org

Conference: Central Pacific, PO Box 22588 Portland OR 97269

Phone: (503) 228 – 3187

Email: centralpacific@cpcucc.org

Conference Minister: Rev. Tyler Connoley

Phone: (575) 956 – 3316

Email: tyler@cpcucc.org

Summary Ministry Description:

First Congregational United Church of Christ continues to offer extravagant hospitality to people who are curious and questioning about progressive Christianity, providing resources to joyfully live out a relational spirituality as members of the beloved community. We are committed to a mutual ministry of collaborative participation in our downtown cultural core, actively exploring together how our members and our building can serve the wider community and act as agents of transforming justice, mercy, and peace. As an intentionally inclusive congregation in central Portland, we aspire to be a church that is abuzz with welcoming activities and community services every day of the week, including visual and performing arts. We seek a pastor with demonstrated experience in creative urban ministry. We envision a leader who communicates openly, insightfully, and compassionately; one who loves pastoral care, engaging worship both in person and online; and who practices responsible management of human and financial resources.

What we value about living in our area:

People of FCUCC live in a bi-state area known as Portland Metro, with downtown being the heart and the hub of the regional public transportation system. We value the vibrancy of the area, which includes residents of varying ethnic, racial, cultural backgrounds and gender identities. Portlanders appreciate the quality of life, the outdoor recreational opportunities, the cultural offerings, and the widespread support for environmental concerns. We are given numerous opportunities to engage with both nearby residents and visitors to our downtown setting.

The congregation recognizes the importance of being part of the cultural core, which includes the Portland Art Museum, Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, Portland 5 Performing Arts Center, Portland State University, and the Oregon Historical Society, as well as other downtown religious communities.

Current size of membership:

153 (post-Covid estimate)

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

Some proficiency in Spanish is a “plus”, especially for involvement with immigrant welcoming or migrant workers.

Position Title:

Pastor

Position Duration:

Settled

Compensation Level:

Full Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines?

Yes

1b. SCOPE OF WORK

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

- Formation and advancement of progressive Christianity—by promoting engaging and visionary opportunities for learning, exploring resources, discussion, prayer, and respectful engagement with our own UCC faith tradition as well as other local faith communities.
- Leadership of inclusive “hybrid” worship at the church and online, including preparation of liturgy, sermon, announcements, and sacraments. Ongoing planning with the worship team, music, technical and support staff, and lay liturgists.
- Leadership development in cooperation with lay leaders, including evaluation, facilitating improvements, and furthering implementation of the congregation’s ministries based on collaboration and communication, transparency and trust, responsibility, and renewal.
- Strategic planning for new directions in ministry and mission, inspiring the church to respond to the challenges and opportunities ahead with confidence, innovation, unity and trust in God’s grace and love.
- Recognized presence and leadership in downtown Portland that engages the congregation in ministries of justice and mercy, as well as networking with nearby arts, music, education, government, religious, and social justice communities. Pastoral care and outreach to visitors, the physically and mentally ill, hospitalized, elderly, grieving, homebound, houseless, or marginalized.

Core Competencies:

- **Experienced** as head of staff ministering within the context of the progressive urban church.
- **Self-confident, mature, approachable**, interested in people and open to their viewpoints.
- **Comfortable** with collaborative leadership in the congregational setting.
- **Worship and preaching** that is engaging, inspiring, and relevant.

1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

Salary Basis:

Salary plus Housing compensation for this position is negotiable within a range of \$105,000 to \$135,000.

Benefits:

Pension, Health/Dental, SECA, Life/Disability Insurance.

What is the expected living situation for your next minister?

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

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

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

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

Central Pacific Conference clergy, Portland area women clergy, and Portland interfaith queer clergy have active support groups, as do various clergy professional development, affinity, and interest groups. There are also numerous interfaith organizations focused on social justice education, advocacy, and action, such as Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) and the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (IMIrJ). There is an annual Central Pacific Conference clergy retreat and an Annual Conference Gathering as well as workshops and webcasts sponsored by the Conference Ministry Teams. Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA as well as colleges and universities throughout the Northwest offer significant continuing education and advanced degree programs.

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 seek collaborative leadership to help us create a vibrant, inclusive, and supportive spiritual community that will be of service to its members and the wider community, and which will draw people into our congregation. Leadership that generates fresh ideas for hospitality and outreach, invigorates our faith formation opportunities, and works with us to create durable, flexible governance processes.

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

We envision a pastor who will work with us to reach out beyond our walls to our local arts and education communities, neighboring downtown churches, asylum seekers and refugees, the victims of addiction, crime, and gun violence, and our hungry and houseless neighbors. We are already involved in such ministries throughout commitments to Open and Affirming, Immigration Justice, Portland's houseless population, and other social justice/political advocacy issues. Because of our central location in Portland's Cultural District, we have developed a vibrant music program and an impressive ArtReach Gallery. We aspire to be a leader among the nearby churches in pooling our resources to have a greater impact than any of us can have on our own. We seek to welcome our diverse neighbors within our doors, whether it be through worship, events, advocacy, actions, or community organizations that use our building during the week.

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

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

Based on what you have learned about who your church is, who your church's neighbor is, and who God is calling the church to become, describe four areas of

excellence from *The Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry* that your next minister will display to further equip the congregation's ministry in these areas.

- **Exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the UCC: continuing testimony, extravagant welcome, and changing lives.**
 - Our next pastor will embody the UCC's progressive, forward-looking values of radical acceptance and hospitality and seek to reach out to all people, both those who walk in our door and those who walk past it, while grounding our theology and actions in scripture and the example of Jesus Christ. Maintaining and revitalizing our hospitality and expanding the warmth of worship are extremely important to us in creating a space that is welcoming to all.
- **Practicing self-care and life balance.**
 - Our next minister will have an awareness of their own strengths, needs, and challenges and draw on the support offered by the Church Council and the Pastoral Relations Committee. Our governance system is designed to provide additional program leadership and help as needed. We want to be a community in which no one person is responsible for everything but rather where our skills and competencies complement and backup one another.
- **Drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression.**
 - Bringing the example of Jesus Christ to life and demonstrating the ongoing relevance of these sacred stories channels energy and vitality to our congregation. This emphasis also appeals to new visitors who may have different faith experiences but see the value of the countercultural message of Jesus. We seek to ground our outreach and community engagement in the radical ministry of Jesus.
- **Understanding community context and navigating change with a community.**
 - Our church has gone through much change in recent years, as have many mainline Protestant churches, and our next minister will have the ability to adapt their messages and pastoral style to our needs while reaching beyond our comfort zone and the way we've always done things. We eagerly look forward to embracing new opportunities presented by our local community and by evolving communication technology, and our next minister will work with us to assess the work we can do and how we can all share it together.

2. WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME AS A CONGREGATION?

“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?

As a historic, urban, and progressive Christian congregation, we continue to identify the ways we can best minister to each other, to our neighbors, and to the wider community. We support creative initiatives and seek mutual ministries and collaboration with our pastoral leadership. We strive to be a sanctuary in the urban center of Portland with compassion, open discussion, and Congregational engagement.

Here, you’ll find a long history of advocacy for equal rights in voting, for global peace, for gun safety, and for justice for all, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or economic status. We strive to be an Open and Affirming and an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation.

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

Our congregation, like the wider church and communities across Portland and the United States has struggled during the last four years with both internal and external challenges.

Over this period, we have learned to adapt, become more flexible and self-reliant despite numerous challenges that ranged from the pandemic, a city in turmoil, an explosion of homeless people on our streets and in our parks, and an unexpected pastoral leadership change.

We responded to the pandemic by incorporating virtual, on-line services and currently host dynamic hybrid worship services each Sunday both in our historic sanctuary and in the less formal Fellowship Hall.

Worship is led by ordained clergy and lay members, featuring traditional and contemporary choral and instrumental music, and stimulating preaching. We have incorporated staff expertise and state of the art technology to offer an exemplary worship experience. As a result,

our reach is greater than just to those who can be downtown on Sunday mornings. We are committed to building on these foundations.

In the midst of the pandemic and following the murder of George Floyd, Portland experienced nightly turmoil, often featured on the national news. The church, located just four blocks west of the demonstrations' epicenter, was the only institution that opened its doors to provide respite for those who were providing first aid/assistance to the protesters.

We continue to explore city-wide partnerships and support for those who are houseless and experiencing food insecurity in our midst. Important new collaborations in ministry and outreach are in the works!

Another noteworthy component of our ministry is the ArtReach Gallery, which is housed in our Fellowship Hall and Chapel. The Gallery has emerged over the past ten years as a touchstone of our collective identity. It includes an impressive art library for members and visitors alike. In recent years, the gallery has grown substantially to attract artists from around the world with shows often affiliated with our other ministries. First Congregational Church UCC Portland has also been instrumental in nurturing collaboration with seven other downtown churches' art galleries. Being situated across the street from the Portland Art Museum, the Oregon Historical Society and near Portland State University has been a bonus for our endeavors.

Our recent challenges have also included the abrupt departure of our most recently called pastor following a lengthy medical leave of absence. He was with us for barely 18 months and was the third settled minister to leave during the past 10 years due to widely varying circumstances. Throughout these leadership transitions, the church has been supported by skillful interim and designated term pastors as well as our own cadre of retired clergy members. These losses have necessitated a good deal of self-reflection. Through it all, we believe our congregation has become more adaptive to change, increasingly flexible and better equipped to address the challenges and opportunities of the future.



SANCTUARY WEDDING



AFTER CHURCH WALKING GROUP



**WEDNESDAY NOON MUSIC
ON THE PORCH**



ART REACH GALLERY

3. WHO ARE WE NOW?

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

3a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS

Describe your congregation’s life of faith.

- Theologically progressive with a variety of faith and religious perspectives.
- Increasing number of members eager to grow in faith and familiarity with each other and God via small groups and sharing of personal stories.
- In other words, a typical progressive Protestant congregation.
- On the other hand, we have as many as 19 active or retired clergy in the congregation.

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

- Willingness to explore novel approaches to issues, worship, and ministry outreach.
- Excellent music program for Sunday worship.
- Strong social action and commitment to justice issues.
- Deep personal relationships between members once established.
- “Called to Care” pastoral outreach by designated members.
- Commitment to the community of faith.
- Solid core of supportive retired/former clergy.
- Church building provides outreach to wider community including concerts, lectures, art displays, meeting space for help groups, etc.

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

- Joyful worship in a traditional format with contemporary touches, including use of projected images, occasional videos, a rich variety of music including hymns, choral and instrumental selections.
- “Hybrid worship” offered both online and in the sanctuary is now viewed as standard. Virtual participants are acknowledged and integrated via visitor welcome, passing of the peace, prayer requests, chat commentary, etc.
- Stimulating and relevant preaching expected and highly appreciated.

- Accomplished Musical Director/Organist who works with the preacher to coordinate themes for worship.
- Weekly participation by members as liturgists, offering scripture readings, offertory, and announcements (“Our Life Together”).
- Monthly Communion by intinction, with other forms used occasionally.
- Worship planning team meets monthly with Pastor to evaluate and plan.
- Impressive upstairs sanctuary with historic architectural accents, accessible via elevator.

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

- Frequent adult faith-formation opportunities are offered on Sunday morning or during the week via Zoom, including book studies, sermon-based discussions, artist forums, etc.
- Eve’s Circle Women’s Fellowship hosts occasional forums that are often open to the entire congregation.
- Families are encouraged to participate and bring their children to church. Sunday morning activities are available and members ready to reach out to children and youth whenever they are present.

Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

- Several years ago, efforts were made to organize the congregation into three “Core Ministries” of Hospitality, Community Life, and Peacemaking. This governance model has never been fully implemented and is currently being re-evaluated as part of a review of the bylaws.
- We currently are governed by a monthly meeting of the Church Council, consisting of the Moderator, Vice Moderator, immediate Past Moderator, Secretary-Treasurer, three At-Large Members, and the Pastor. This model is also being reassessed.
- The three moderators meet monthly with the Pastor to plan the Council agenda and act as an emergency executive committee when necessary.
- As mandated by our bylaws and policies, we have an active Financial Oversight Committee, an ad hoc Budget Development and Stewardship Committees, as well as Nominating and Personnel Committees. We rely on our Pastoral Relations Committee to offer confidential support and advice to pastoral leaders and expect our pastors to incorporate these resources into their ministries.
- An ad hoc group of members appointed by the Church Council is currently reviewing and updating the Bylaws to reflect governance reality and practices more accurately.

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

Hours spent in decision-making range from 8 – 12 if one counts only meetings that include lay leaders/committees/teams, to upwards of 22 – 24 hours if one also includes staff meetings that take place in various configurations throughout the month.

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

The church has long responded with compassion to the needs of our unhoused neighbors. Our front porch has often provided both day and nighttime shelter. As an example of outreach, in collaboration with a local community group a refrigerator was stocked and placed on the porch. This proved problematic as the refrigerator was repeatedly vandalized and finally tipped over into the street.

At the same time, the situation was becoming critically unsafe. Threats of violence were made to church members and staff as well as passers-by. The porch was constantly used as a bathroom and garbage dump. Drugs and alcohol were openly consumed and sold. Fires were lit not only for warmth but to facilitate the illegal use of fentanyl. Our insurance provider as well as the security detail contracted by the church declared that the situation was becoming untenable for them.

This called for immediate action. The Church Council met and decided to erect a temporary fence until a more permanent solution could be found. Presented to the congregation, most agreed, some were unhappy but understood the need for fencing, and one strongly objected. A follow-up meeting was held and the reasons for the decision clearly outlined. Opinions were shared and options discussed. Out of this meeting two groups were formed: a Community Connections Committee to seek ways to collaborate with other community groups to address the needs of our unhoused neighbors, and a Portico Planning Committee to develop a plan for permanent fencing and gates that will be aesthetically pleasing and have architectural integrity.

In the meantime, temporary movable chain-link fencing went up. Seeing that the fence appeared unsightly and inhospitable, a group of church members were inspired to decorate the fence with fabric and yarn flowers, creating a cheerful and blossoming garden. When folks passing by decided to pluck the handmade flowers, a whole new blossoming happened, which

continues. You could say in the wake of a difficult challenge, the congregation has taken to heart the old hymn, “Brighten the Corner Where You Are!”

Since the fencing went up, our nearby community neighbors- the Oregon Historical Society, the Portland Art Museum, the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, and the Portland 5 Performing Arts Center—all experiencing similar challenges, have expressed appreciation for our taking this action.

3b. 11-YEAR REPORT

3 B. Eleven Year Report 6/5/23

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



Church#: 70350

Assoc: 96 Schedule: 0 First Congregational UCC Portland OR 97205

YEAR	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	CONFIRMATION	CONFESSION	TRANSFER OR REAFFIRM	DEATHS OR TRANS OUT	OTHER LOSSES	NET MEMBS ADDS-REMOVED
2012	334	139	89	5	0	30	5	23	7
2013	326	129	49	0	6	4	13	5	-8
2014	334	136	50	0	1	14	4	5	6
2015	273	158	125	0	0	28	11	78	-61
2016	298	142	125	0	0	10	7	3	0
2017	297	129	125	0	0	5	6	0	-1
2018	287	111	125	0	0	0	10	0	-10
2019	222	94	28	0	0	14	4	75	-65
2020	195	65	38	0	0	4	14	17	-27
2021	165	45	57	0	0	0	7	23	-30
2022	155	70	65	0	0	1	9	2	-10

YEAR	CURRENT EXPENSES	CAPITAL PAYMENTS	BASIC SUPPORT	TOT OTHER UCC GIVING	TOTAL OCWM	OTHER GIFTS	WIDER MISSION	BASIC SUPP% CURR LOCAL	TOTAL EXPEND	PLEDGES AND OFFERINGS
2012	\$578,556	\$0	\$22,805	\$9,903	\$32,708	\$11,239	\$43,947	3.94	\$622,503	\$227,707
2013	\$600,400	\$0	\$21,090	\$7,212	\$28,302	\$4,541	\$32,843	3.51	\$633,243	\$194,042
2014	\$644,945	\$0	\$21,000	\$7,489	\$28,489	\$4,278	\$32,767	3.26	\$677,712	\$182,839
2015	\$713,881	\$328,476	\$21,000	\$6,007	\$27,007	\$6,447	\$33,454	2.94	\$1,075,811	\$200,315
2016	\$713,881	\$0	\$5,183	\$3,549	\$8,732	\$0	\$8,732	0.73	\$722,613	\$214,749
2017	\$713,881	\$0	\$7,419	\$3,030	\$10,449	\$0	\$10,449	1.04	\$724,330	\$200,505
2018	\$713,881	\$0	\$7,390	\$1,060	\$8,450	\$0	\$8,450	1.04	\$722,331	\$174,240
2019	\$653,839	\$8,644	\$7,300	\$4,747	\$12,047	\$0	\$12,047	1.12	\$665,886	\$153,436
2020	\$798,420	\$0	\$9,229	\$13,689	\$22,918	\$0	\$22,918	1.16	\$821,338	\$129,576
2021	\$710,540	\$0	\$6,922	\$12,389	\$19,311	\$2,305	\$21,616	0.97	\$732,156	\$137,831
2022	\$773,964	\$0	\$13,844	\$12,479	\$26,323	\$4,368	\$30,711	1.79	\$804,675	\$149,432

% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	TOTAL ADDITIONS	TOTAL REMOVALS	CURR LOCAL EXPENSES	TOTAL OCWM	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
2017-2022	-47.81	-45.74	-48.00	-80.00	83.33	8.42	151.92	11.09
2012-2022	-53.59	-49.64	-26.97	-97.14	-60.71	33.78	-19.52	29.26

Please note: Zero values ("0" or "\$0") may reflect missing information in some years. Christian Education/Faith Formation refers to Church School Enrollment for all figures before 2007.

3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (Check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	153	Yes
Number of active non-members:	34	Yes
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	187	Yes

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (Check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	63%	Yes
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	26%	Yes
Less than 5 years:	11%	Yes

Number of total participants by age:

0-5	6-18	19-25	26-34	35-50	51-65	65-80	80+	Total	<i>Are these numbers an estimate? (Check if yes)</i>
3	6	10	5	24	30	83	26	187	Yes

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (Check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	6%	Yes
Households with minors:	16%	Yes
Single adults age 35-65:	7%	Yes

Joint households with no minors:	39%	Yes
Single adults over 65:	32%	Yes

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (Check if yes)</i>
High school:	8%	Yes
Some College:	7%	Yes
Graduated College:	55%	Yes
Graduate Level	30%	Yes
Other (please specify):		

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (Check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	26%	Yes
Adults who are retired:	68%	Yes
Adults who are not fully employed:	6%	Yes

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

Education, Health Care, Nonprofits, Service Industry, Social Work, Technology, White-Collar Professionals, Ministry.

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

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (Check if yes)</i>
White (Non-Hispanic)	90%	Yes
Asian	2%	Yes
Hispanic	4%	Yes
Black or African- American	2%	Yes
Other (including Indigenous)	2%	Yes

What does diversity mean in your context?

Portland is recognized as one of the least racially diverse major cities in America, although this is gradually changing. The city is viewed quite favorably today as politically, socially, economically, and culturally liberal, but this identity is a relatively recent development (over the last 50 years) and is still somewhat aspirational. Historically and traditionally, Portland has been far more conservative or reactionary, including harboring lingering racist biases, economic inequalities, and social injustices.

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

Our long-time stance as an Open and Affirming congregation has resulted in a significant portion of our congregation identifying as LGBTQ+ or as people with LGBTQ+ family members. We have a significant history of Queer people in leadership.

The number of families with children in the congregation has dwindled since 2018. The pandemic took its toll, as did the departure of several pastors. Although we have members eager and ready to welcome children in worship and other activities, there is very limited

participation in church life by young people, except for occasional visitors, including grandchildren. We are not content with this situation; solutions to be explored in the future might include changes in our program offerings and additional pastoral or staff support.

Has your congregation recently had a conversation about welcoming diversity, or do you plan to hold one soon?

Diversity surfaced repeatedly in congregational conversations during the 2018-2020 interim, including a summer 2019 sermon series and all-church discussion about our Church Covenant. The topic again figured prominently during an early 2023 church-wide retreat.

Furthermore, as part of the previous Transition Team’s Chapel Conversations in Fall 2019 we held several conversations about Welcoming Diversity with participants from the congregation after worship. Some of the discussion included:

- We welcome diversity by rejecting a “them and us” mentality and assumptions about other people in the congregation and the wider community. Instead, our goal is intentional inclusion and reaching out to become more acquainted with and appreciative of each other.
- We face the challenges of integrating new ideas and reaching out to newer members. We recognize the importance of intergenerational interaction, showing welcome and reaching out to make places for everyone—longtime and new members, and visitors alike.
- We respect the diversity of opinions, personal spiritualities, diverse backgrounds and politics, which require us to engage in ongoing conversation and the envisioning of necessary changes.
- We see a need for ongoing scheduling of small group discussions or similar activities to encourage participation and involvement of everyone using a combination of structured and not-so-structured formats to include a radical welcome.

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	60	ArtReach Curator, Pastor, Retired Ministers, Lay Leaders, Eve's Circle
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>	0	
Children's Groups or Classes	5	Parents, Retired Ministers, Lay Leaders, Child Care Provider
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	75 – 90	Pastor, Worship Team, and Music Director/Organist
Church-wide Meals	50	Fellowship and Hospitality Core Ministry Facilitators
Choirs and Music Groups	12 – 16 in Choir, 10-12 in guest instrumental groups	Music Director/Organist
Church-based Bible Study	See Adult Groups	Pastor
Communion <i>(served how often?)</i>	75 – 80, offered monthly	Pastor, Liturgist, and Servers
Community Meals	10 (who serve)	Team members of "Potluck in the Park"
Confirmation <i>(number confirmed last year)</i>	None	
Drama or Dance Program	None	

Funerals (<i>number last year</i>)	6 – 12	Pastor, “Called to Care” Team, Music Director/Organist
Intergenerational Groups	None	
Outdoor Worship	None	
Prayer or Meditation Groups	15	Pastor, Retired Ministers, Lay Leaders
Public Advocacy Work	25	Pastor, Lay Leaders
Retreats	40	Pastor, Planning Teams, Eve’s Circle
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community	None	
Weddings (<i>number last year</i>)	3	Pastor, Music Director/Organist
Worship (10:30am on Sunday)	Ave. 70 – 80 per week	Pastor, Music Director/Organist, Worship Team, Liturgist.
Young Adult Groups or Classes	None	
Youth Groups or Classes	None	
Other: “Called to Care” (Pastoral Care and Outreach)	6	Pastor, Retired Ministers, and Lay Leaders

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.

Name	Three- or Four-Way Covenant? (3 or 4 or no)	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired? (Y or N)
Frank Baldwin	No	Local Church, Pacific University	Pulpit Supply, Trans Team, Chaplain <i>pro tem</i>	Yes

William Cunitz	No	Local Church, Central Pacific Conference, UCC Pension Board	Pulpit Supply, Search Comm. CPC Fund Dev., UCCPB Visitor	Yes
Denise Denniston	Four-Way	Hospital	Chaplain	No
Pam Fine	No			Yes
Lindsay Fulmer	No	Local Church	Pulpit Supply	Yes
William Greene	Yes	Local Church	Pulpit Supply	Yes
Robert Haworth	Yes	Local Church (Germany)	Pulpit Supply	Yes
Simon Ho	No	Hospital	Chaplain	No
Sheldon Hurst	No	Local Church	ArtReach Gallery Curator, Adult Education	Yes
Lorence Long	No			Yes
Frances Menlove	Yes	Local Church		Yes
Bunny Oliver	No	Local Church	Pulpit Supply, Faith Formation	Yes
Philip Oliver	No	Alcohol Treatment Center	Group Counselor	Yes
Phil Owen	No	Local Church	Pulpit Supply	Yes

Brigitta Remole	No	Local Church	Designated Interim Pastor	No
Patricia Ross	No	Former Sr. Pastor	Minister Emerita	Yes
Kevin Smith	No	Local Church	Search Committee	Yes
Bruce Swanson	No	Local Church		Yes
Gary Vaughan	No	Local Church	Pulpit Supply, Search Committee	Yes
Avena Ward	No	Local Church, UCC Pension Board	Pulpit Supply, Spiritual Director UCCPB Annuitant Visitor	Yes

If one or more previous pastors or retired ministers currently hold membership in the church, describe their role(s) in the life of the congregation:

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

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

Staff Position	Head of Staff?	Compensation (full time, part time, volunteer)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
----------------	----------------	--	---------------	--

Brigitta Remole, designated term pastor	Yes	Full Time	Congregation, Church Council	11 months
Keith Powell, Business Manager	Yes Non-Ministerial Staff Supervisor	Full Time	Pastor Personnel Team	13 months
Andre Cordes, Accounting Coordinator, Contractor	No	Part Time	Business Manager	5 years
Grant Edwards, Music Director, Organist	No	Part Time	Pastor	14 years
Steve Eggers, Facilities Manager, Contractor, booking agent/production manager	No	Part Time	Business Manager	6 months
April Alexander, Communications and Office Manager	No	Full Time	Business Manager	9 months
Greg McMahan, Choir Section Leader	No	Part Time	Music Director	19 months
Sheryl Woods, Choir Section Leader	No	Part Time	Music Director	6 years
Elizabeth Winship, Choir Section Leader	No	Part Time	Music Director	5 years
Avesta Mirashrafi, Choir Section Leader	No	Part Time	Music Director	17 months

Maureen Gullet, custodian and event staff	No	Part Time	Business Manager	6 years
Thea Klucznik, custodial and event staff	No	Part Time	Business manager	1 year
Keelin Sullivan, childcare	No	Part Time	Business Manager	14 months
Erin Mella, childcare	No	Part Time	Business Manager	14 months
Jeff Dodge, audio/visual contractor	No	Part Time	Business Manager	8 months
Ed Cecere, audio/visual contractor	No	Part Time	Business Manager	6 months
Vonnie Murphy, booking agent/production manager contractor	No	Part Time	Business Manager	8 months

3e. CHURCH FINANCES

Please see Appendix A for the 2023 Church Budget, adopted at the Annual Meeting of First Congregational UCC of Portland, January 29th, 2023.

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

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

The annual income for the 2023 budget is:

Ordinary income: \$706,704

Other Income: \$113,615

Total Income: \$820,319

The annual expenses for the 2023 budget are:

Total Expense: \$820, 377

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

Of the total budgeted expenses, \$143,843 or 17.5% is for ministerial support. This total is comprised of \$143,043 for ministerial and \$800 for substitute pastors.

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

The church has never failed to pay its financial obligations.

Is your church 5-for-5?

Our church has long been committed to being 5 for 5 in contributing to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and special UCC offerings.

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

OCWM is part of the 2023 budget with a total of \$9,299 (1.3%), which is paid quarterly.

What is the church's current indebtedness?

The church has no current indebtedness.

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

Two major building-related projects are under consideration. First, the City of Portland is extensively upgrading its sewage disposal system, requiring the church to make a new

connection to the main sewer line. Preliminary estimates are that this project could cost from \$75,000 - \$100,000. The project is expected to be completed by October 2024.

Early in 2023, the church council acted to install temporary fencing across the church's entrance to maintain the safety of the area and to protect the church building. The church is studying a permanent installation that is architecturally and historically appropriate. This project may cost \$100,000 (or more) and is hoped to be installed in 2024.

Both projects are expected to be paid for out of current church reserves, including a building fund dedicated to such purposes, without the need for a capital campaign.

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

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

Does your church have an endowment?

The church has two endowed funds totaling \$129,202. One is dedicated to the sponsorship of civic lectures. The other's use is not designated. Earnings can be withdrawn from church endowments in accordance with donor preferences and pursuant to Council policy. In addition to the endowment funds, the church has temporarily restricted funds totaling \$88,856 and unrestricted investment funds of \$1,091,222. These restricted and unrestricted funds total \$1,309,280. The church is also the custodian of funds donated to support the conference's outdoor ministries at Camp Adams in the amount of \$138,000.

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

Unrestricted funds are drawn on for special projects and general operational needs. Depending on church income and expenses, the earnings from unrestricted funds may be used. Such decisions are made by the church council based on recommendations of the treasurer and financial oversight committee.

What is the percentage rate of draw last year, compared to five years ago?

The draw on reserves for 2019 was \$60,287 (or 5%) of reserves based on a rolling average of funds available for 12 calendar quarters. Although the church budget in 2022 anticipated a possible draw of \$50,787, no such transfer was needed.

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

During the most recent year (2022), the only draw from endowment earnings has been for a lecture relating to the Peace Corps in conjunction with an exhibit at the church’s art gallery. No endowment draws have been made to meet operating budget expenses during the last year or the past five years.

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

Forever.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

The church staff, secretary-treasurer, financial oversight committee (comprised of up to five church members, currently including two retired lawyers, a retired UCC minister, and an accountant), and church council provide regular (at least monthly) oversight of church finances. The church last conducted a full financial audit in 2018 and has preliminary plans to do so again in 2024.

Other Assets:

Other assets (reserves and investments) are described above, not including the potential value of our building and church-owned leased properties.

Does your church have a parsonage?

The church has no parsonage.

Describe all the buildings owned by the church:

The only building owned by the church is the historic church building (dedicated in 1895 and continuously operating since then). The church owns three quarters of the block where the church is situated in the downtown Portland Arts District.

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

The church and the regional government, Metro, are parties to a 99-year lease (terminating in approximately 2090) on two quarters of the church's owned property. The church leases office space adjacent to the church building from Metro, which manages five performing arts centers on property leased from the church. The leased office space (called the "Church Annex") is located at street level below one of the theaters on downtown Portland's main thoroughfare. Offices not needed by church staff are sub-let to local nonprofit organizations. Under the terms of the lease, the church is also entitled to free parking for Sunday worshippers at a nearby parking garage.

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs?

All spaces are wheelchair accessible, except for the sanctuary balcony and organ loft.

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

Portland First Congregational UCC is the grateful beneficiary of the generations of devout congregants who've preceded us. From Frank and Anna Warren* who helped financially in the 1890s to build our current church building; to members like the Brown family whose generosity continues to sustain us through Oregon Community Foundation grants; to leaders who facilitated the construction of performing arts centers on property leased from our church. Their gifts have not been forgotten. The church's investments- managed by United Church Funds in a variety of endowed, reserved, and unreserved funds- enable our relatively small congregation to have an outsized impact in our ministries.

*Anna Warren was the daughter of George Atkinson, the Congregational minister and educator who preached our church's dedication sermon in 1851 and served as our pastor 1863 – 1872. Returning from their 50th wedding anniversary, Anna survived the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, although Frank did not.

The church has experienced financial and ministerial ups and downs during its 172-year history in Portland, Oregon. The church has managed its financial resources prudently. The church has always paid its bills and fulfilled its financial and stewardship responsibilities through worldwide pandemics, wars, and economic disasters. Were it not for the faithful stewardship

and beneficence of the church's former members, our doors would have had to close decades ago. We are at an important crossroads today to keep the church vibrant.

When considering the church's historical financial priorities to date, we rank them as follows:

1. Supporting the church's mission and ministries within our congregational community, our neighborhood, and the greater Portland metropolitan area.
2. Hiring and retaining well-qualified and committed ordained pastors and lay staffers.
3. Using our financial, human, and physical resources to remain a progressive, open, affirming, welcoming and justice-seeking presence in Portland.
4. Building, maintaining, and improving the church's locale, historic buildings, and interior spaces, for our congregation and the wider community.
5. Supporting the UCC church's wider missions in Portland, Oregon, and the Pacific Northwest.

Even after several years of declining membership and pledges, which were typically addressed with budget reductions, the occasional use of reserves, and offset with faithful stewardship, the church maintains favorable cash and savings totaling over \$1,512,000. In addition, the church owns a landmark church building, along with three-quarters of a city block in the heart of Portland's cultural district, facing the Park Blocks. The primary financial challenge is to increase support for and engagement with the church's ministries with our investment resources.



WORKDAY AT UCC CAMP ADAMS



**SECOND SUNDAY WORSHIP IN
FELLOWSHIP HALL / ART REACH GALLERY**



**DEDICATION OF ANTI-GUN
VIOLENCE SOUL BOXES**



INDIGO GIRLS PROTEST CONCERT

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.

Besides the 1851 founding by ten pioneer members of the First Congregational Church in what was then the muddy wilderness of Portland, Oregon, the event of most enduring significance was assuredly the construction and dedication of the present sanctuary in 1890 – 1895. The structure was ambitiously designed in the historic Venetian Gothic style with exquisite stained-glass, three corner towers, and a central spire. For sixty years the highest of the towers, at 175 feet, was the tallest building in Portland and is still a central city landmark. The two lower towers, along with the central spire, were removed seventy years ago due to the ravages of weather, structural deterioration, and the relentless invasion of pigeons. This iconic downtown building continues to provide the setting and scope of the congregation’s ministry and mission. It has been not only an eloquent house of worship, but also a center for fellowship and faith formation, a home for music and the arts, a regional cultural center, a mobilizing station for community service and social justice action, and an outstanding architectural statement of Christian presence and conscience in the midst of the city.

A related sequence of events with lasting effect was the construction, in the early 1980s, of a large-scale public performing arts facility on property owned by the church and located immediately to the north and east of the sanctuary. Under terms of a 99-year lease, the performing arts center generates revenue for the church’s ministries and funding for building maintenance and improvements. The church’s own exceptional performance spaces, along with its musical and artistic resources, make a noteworthy contribution to the wider community. With adjacent theaters and concert halls, the Oregon Historical Society, the Portland Art Museum, and Portland State University just a few blocks to the south, First Congregational UCC is a partner in an exciting metropolitan cultural matrix.

The most important aspect of this past decade has been the near-constant arrival and departure of our clergy. Between 2013 and 2023 the members of First Congregational UCC have had eight different senior, associate, assistant, designated term, and interim ministers. These pastoral leaders were all well-qualified, eagerly welcomed, caring and capable, articulate, and likable. They came and went for a variety of reasons, but their unexpected departures left recurring feelings of confusion, grief, loss, inadequacy, anger, and guilt.

Membership and stewardship have declined accordingly. During the intervals between called pastors, the congregation has worked diligently with skillful interims to respond, understand, and minister to these reactions, in order that healing, understanding, reconciliation, and a different kind of future will be possible. The gifts of these past ten years of loss and transition have included humility, resilience, vision, a spirit of grace and unity in our life together, and a depth of gratitude for all the good that remains, thanks be to God.

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

The church's historic building is highly esteemed, both by the congregation and the wider community. Accordingly, there has always been continuous attention to maintenance, along with periodic major repair and upgrading efforts. The two most recent of these projects were undertaken in 2004 when the sanctuary worship space was extensively remodeled to improve accessibility, enhance the organ and piano, and relocate the choir to a reconfigured chancel; and in 2015 when the belltower was totally renovated. Due to its unique physical properties, the sanctuary has always presented the congregation with acoustical challenges. While music is usually heard very well, the spoken word is affected by sound-absorbing physical dimensions, baffling dead spaces, mysterious echoes, and intrusive noises. Various remedies have been attempted over the years, including speaker and microphone systems, personal hearing-aid units, and relocating the choir, but without reliable outcomes. These issues became critical when worship had to move online due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. Attempting to manage this transition "in house," the church invested in equipment supposedly enabling the service to be broadcast via Zoom with accessory features accessed from the internet, but the results were not satisfactory. When the pandemic restrictions eased and the congregation began returning to the sanctuary, "hybrid" worship became essential and more problematic, requiring simultaneous acoustical excellence both inside the church and online. Determined to finally resolve all these issues, the Church Council authorized the hiring of knowledgeable acoustical consultants, the purchase of high-quality sound and video equipment, the upgrading of online programming, and the engagement of qualified technicians to operate these new worship resources every Sunday. The results have been extremely effective and greatly appreciated!

Describe your congregation's values and practices when it comes to conflict:

First Congregational UCC has long fostered values of transparency, inclusivity, communication, collaboration, and accountability, not only in our governance practices and mission priorities, but in essential interaction among members and staff. In actual experience, however

sometimes the aspirational values of the church have not always aligned with the church's lived experiences involving decision making and differences of opinion. The Church is committed to creating better opportunities for the congregation to manage conflict more constructively, for example, by activating effective Personnel and Pastoral Relations committees, expanding communications systems, providing more opportunities for sharing information, appreciating a diversity of viewpoints, and taking the time to discern broadly acceptable outcomes.

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

The departure of our three most recent senior pastors after relatively brief tenures generated both conflict and confusion among the members as it was assumed that unresolved staff issues and disappointment around shared ministry objectives were to blame. People felt guilty, sad, and even angry that the circumstances of these departures were not discussed openly or reviewed more broadly, and it was necessary for individuals to reach their own conclusions, whether they were correct.

The departure of our most recent Senior Minister following a lengthy and unexplained emergency medical leave has been especially painful. In retrospect, we now see that we could have been more conscious of the challenges involved in undertaking an ambitious new ministry in the midst of a global pandemic. We could have encouraged our Minister to seek out support to help address brewing concerns through the Pastoral Relations Committee or other means. Perhaps a sensitive intervention or consultation could have refocused all of us on the emerging problems of communication, collaboration, and accountability.

It is both remarkable and heartening that our most recent pastoral departures have resulted far more in shared disappointment and constructive self-searching than in conflict, criticism, and crisis. Our periods of transition have been well-led by skillful interim pastors, and we have discovered within our congregation rich resources of spiritual leadership, administration, worship, faith formation, and community outreach. The present period of interim ministry is providing opportunities to envision and experience a church culture more truly given to relationships of openness, inclusion, flexibility and caring. Further training in healthy conflict and communication is included in this vision.

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

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

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

Patricia Ross was Associate Minister with John Rogers, and then in 1996 the first woman Senior Minister. That year the Church celebrated the 100th anniversary of its National Landmark sanctuary. A book, “That Church with the Tower, Highlights of our History 1851 – 2001” was published five years later. During Rev. Ross’s tenure Paul Davis served as Minister of Congregational Life. Despite financial challenges, First Congregational UCC did well under their leadership. Ross retired in 2008 and was named Minister Emerita. Donna Faith Eldredge then served as Interim Minister.

Anton DeWet served as senior minister from 2009 – 2013. He created an assistant minister position with the intention of hiring Trudy Bradley who was tragically killed in an automobile accident. Sara Rosenau then filled the assistant minister position and continued during the transition and the calling of the next senior minister. In early 2013 Rev. DeWet unexpectedly announced that he had accepted a pastoral call in California for personal reasons. His departure left the congregation with several questions. Charles Svendsen served as Interim Minister.

Michael Ellick was the senior minister from late 2014 to 2018 when he accepted a position with Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. When Rev. Rosenau accepted a solo minister position at Portland’s Waverly Heights UCC, a new assistant minister position was created with the hiring of Elizabeth Durant. Membership growth and declining revenue were major developments during his term. Rev. Ellick’s departure, and the departure of Durant in 2019, again left many in the congregation with mixed feelings. Janet Parker served as Interim Minister from 2018 to 2020.

Eric Elnes served as senior minister from late 2020 to early 2022, coming to us from a nationally recognized ministry that included media, publications, and interfaith collaboration. He introduced new initiatives for worship and community outreach, but his tenure was complicated by personal issues along with the restrictions and challenges of the pandemic.

Rev. Elnes's ministry with the congregation ended suddenly following an extended medical leave from which he did not return. In his absence, an ad hoc team of First Portland retired ministers, officers, and friends of the church provided worship and sermons for five months.

Janet Parker was again our Interim Minister briefly in 2022. Brigitta Remole has been our designated term interim from mid-2022 to the present. Both Rev. Parker and Rev. Remole are capable interim ministers who have skillfully guided the congregation through periods of loss and transition. They helped us discern what had happened to us, where we are now, and how God was calling us into the future.

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

Two well-attended congregational conversations held in the spring of 2023 resulted in substantial agreement about "What Sort of Pastor Are We Looking For?" A summary of these findings suggests what this congregation has learned about itself and our relationship with the pastor we believe we are looking for:

- **Pastoral Care:** A strong and accessible communicator who reaches out to others. In tune with the Protestant principle of the ministry of all believers, the congregation seems increasingly inclined to call our spiritual leader "The Pastor" instead of "The Minister."
- **Spiritual Leadership:** Gives progressive and challenging sermons that are scriptural and relevant to today. Focused on caring about this congregation. Really gets to know us. Encourages warmth and welcome, advocates for inclusion, diversity, equality. A collaborative, effective leader, and administrator.
- **Wider Community:** Committed to the UCC and the Central Pacific Conference. Views our building as a community center as well as a house of worship. Recognizes that we are an urban regional church, not a local one. Reaches out to other churches and faith communities.
- **Personal Characteristics:** Honest, trustworthy, forthright; introspective, authentic, self-aware, curious, adaptive, open-minded, good listener, young at heart, humble, confident, vulnerable, and able to support vulnerability in others, tough, good sense of humor, nurturing.

- **Longevity:** Someone with sufficient faith, vision, resilience, and passion for the life and work of the local congregation, to make a productive and enduring church home with us.

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



THAT CHURCH
WITH
THE TOWER



EVE'S CIRCLE



BIENVENIDOS QUILTS
READY FOR DEDICATION



EASTER MUSIC

4. WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

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

4a. COMMUNITY VISION

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

Beginning in the spring of 2020, the pandemic, unrest on nearby streets resulting from the death of George Floyd, inflation, an unexpected pastoral transition, growing gun violence, drug abuse and homelessness in our city have impacted the way our congregation ministers to our neighbors in Portland and around the world. An earthquake of change has disrupted our momentum but reinforced our vision for a future of service and ministry.

Some initiatives, such as immigrant justice, gun violence, food insecurity and the impact of our ArtReach Gallery have been sustained by our congregation over the past three years, even as we seek to address new opportunities considering emerging post-pandemic, economic, social, and political realities.

- **Immigrant Justice-** In 2019, we passed a formal resolution declaring FCUCC an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation, partnering with other congregations in the Central Pacific Conference. We have supported campaigns to provide drivers’ licenses for all, urged the Oregon Supreme Court to limit ICE activity in Oregon Courthouses, received a grant from the UCC to fund English language workshops for Afghani women and co-sponsored with local UCC churches and other immigrant rights organizations workshops for immigrant support systems. Our ArtReach Gallery featured an exhibit of DACA requirements. Members of our congregation joined together (*Bienvenidos Quilts*) to make and personally deliver hand-made quilts to those at our Southern borders as a sign of our welcome and comfort. Over 500 quilts have been shared with immigrant children since 2021.
- **Protesting Gun Violence-** Our congregation has been active in *The Soul Box Project*, commemorating the victims of gun violence and displaying the increasing numbers of people killed by gunfire. Members and friends folded over 7,000 Soul Boxes, each signifying one victim, to urge our legislators in Salem and

Washington DC to enact meaningful legislation curbing the proliferation of guns and ammunition in the State of Oregon and the United States.

- **ArtReach Gallery-** The arts have been part of First Congregation Church dating back to the 19th Century. According to the records of the Oregon Historical Society, the church's Gallery had an inaugural exhibit on September 14th, 1875, making it the oldest continuous art gallery in Portland. FCUCC member Dr. Sheldon Hurst became curator of the ArtReach Gallery in 2017. An educational component was soon established. A website was created, and two-month exhibits were scheduled including a curator's event accompanying each "opening." A network of seven downtown church art galleries in Portland has been fostered in recent years with shared publicity and access to all exhibits. With Dr. Hurst's recently announced "retirement," we will begin to explore the future direction of the ArtReach Gallery to sustain our legacy and leadership in the local arts scene.
- **Indigenous Justice-** Land acknowledgements are but one way to begin addressing justice issues of indigenous nations of the Pacific Northwest. First Congregational UCC will go deeper this year by hosting Blaine Harden, author of *Murder at the Mission* as our October 2023 Oliver Lecture for the city of Portland, neighboring tribes, and communities. Harden's book is the first effort to tell the story of the Whitman Mission tragedy of 1847 from the tribal perspective. We anticipate this will be a springboard to exploring shared projects with local tribes to understand our common histories and address their most pressing concerns/needs.
- **Community Connections Program 2023-** When the portico of our church building became a dangerous haven for drug dealing, substance abuse and violence, we found it necessary to fence off the area temporarily while investigating more permanent responses to such issues. The Community Connections initiative has become one way for our members to begin exploring how we might partner with existing organizations and churches already serving those in need on the streets and in the neighborhoods of Portland. We anticipate this will be an on-going ministry, renewing service, and advocacy for our neighbors in Portland.

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

Members of the First Congregational UCC of Portland continue to engage in the wider UCC in a variety of ways. Locally, First Congregational has participated in retreats, outdoor events, our Conference Camp Adams, and a local nature retreat. We have co-sponsored and attended regional UCC events, including immigrant justice workshops. Our lay and clergy members have recently served on Central Pacific Conference Committees, including the Committee on Ministry, Board of Directors as Conference Treasurer, members in discernment, as regular participants in the Conference Annual Gathering and some have attended General Synod. Two of our clergy members are currently employed by the UCC Pension Boards, serving as Annuitant Visitors in Central and Northern Oregon and Southern Washington. There are also 19 active or retired clergy members (16 being UCC) of First Congregational UCC Portland.

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.

- Accessible to All (A2A)
- God is Still Speaking (GISS)
- Border and Immigrant Justice
- Open and Affirming (ONA)
- Other UCC designations: 5 for 5 Special Offerings

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

GISS is an important component of our worship and welcome and informs the way in which we welcome visitors and participate in the life of the broader community. We continue to consider

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

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

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

Our congregation’s participation in the community extends to several ecumenical and interfaith activities with religious groups beyond the UCC. Our arts program, the ArtReach Gallery, regularly speaks to themes of social justice, radical hospitality, and interfaith understanding. We worked with seven other local churches to put on “Footprints: Immigration/Migration,” a coordinated show featuring art in seven local churches. We belong to Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, and members have attended rallies and other events hosted by EMO and other local organizations striving for interfaith solutions to social justice issues. As we explore a renewal of our Community Connections, our pastor has begun to meet with clergy from neighboring churches.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reflect on the scope of work assigned to your pastor(s). How is their community ministry and their ministry in and on behalf of the wider church accounted for in the congregation's expectations on their time?

The scope of work assigned to the pastor is currently in flux. Our recent experience of an unexpected short-term called pastorate and resulting pulpit supply and designated term pastor, has been focused on worship, governance, financial matters, personnel oversight, pastoral care, and minimal community outreach. With the creation of a ministry team for Community Connections, however, the pastor has been extending their scope of work to embrace the role we might play in our immediate neighborhood and among other local congregations.

A healthy balance of internally oriented congregational ministry and missionally oriented community/wider church ministry will be an important goal for our next pastor.

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?

During our prior pastoral search, First Congregational UCC accessed the enhanced Mission Insite summary known as a full Insite Report describing the sociology of our congregation and community. Based on statistical estimates analyzed in 2018 with the assistance of the Center for Progressive Renewal (now known as Convergence), the Full Insite report includes projections through 2023 and forecasts through 2028.

While First Church attracts participants from throughout the Portland metropolitan region, the congregation is drawn mostly from Portland neighborhoods adjacent to downtown, hillside areas on the west side of the Willamette River, and established residential neighborhoods and suburbs on the east side of the river. The population of this study area is growing moderately, adding nearly 20,000 new residents over the past 18 years. Our church population is significantly older than that of our study area. The community seems to be adding school age children, while the number of preschool children and young adults is declining, but the church's demographics are not following these trends.

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

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

- Young, City Solos, Singles, and Starters (net 49%), younger and middle-aged singles, and some starter families with active and energetic lifestyles in metropolitan areas.

- Thriving Boomers (net 38%), upper middle class baby boomer-age couples comfortably settled in town and exurban homes.
- PowerElites (8%), the wealthiest households in the US, living in the most exclusive neighborhoods and enjoying a highly advantaged lifestyle.
- Golden Age Guardians (5%), retirees living in settled residences and communities.

Assuming God is working through First UCC Portland exactly where we are right now geographically, in the exact community that we inhabit physically, it might be quite possible to reach out to these segments by responding to their very real needs, with no agenda as to eventual church membership.

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

- Our society must give more attention to accomplishing social and economic justice.
- Solutions must be found to the crises of houselessness, drug abuse, and urban violence.
- We must be good stewards of the environment even if it means restricting natural resource development [such as clear-cut logging, depleting fisheries, drilling for oil, fracking, etc.].
- Humans are affecting the climate of the planet [i.e, global warming].
- Greater emphasis must be given to embracing our ethnic diversity and overcoming racism.

Our neighbors share many values with First UCC Portland. While in past years our congregation was able to attract people due to loyalty to our denomination, these days almost half the people in our area identify as “Nones” (45%) or Spiritual/No Religious Preference (3%) and only 0.7% identify as Congregational or United Church of Christ. In the future it will be our shared values of tolerance and social justice that allow us to connect meaningfully with our neighbors. The ways in which we connect should primarily come from simply listening and getting to know our neighbors. Regardless of what future encounters hold this act of listening stands the best chance of connecting to us our community in miraculous ways.

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

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

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

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

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

Besides recognizing our landmark building and the remarkable variety of public events held here, community leaders are aware—either impressed or dismayed—by First Congregational UCC’s progressive spirit and style, as demonstrated by such commitments as Open & Affirming, Immigrant Welcoming, Racial Justice, the ArtReach Gallery, our presence in interfaith and intercultural activities, and our partnership with numerous community ministry partners.

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

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

5. REFERENCES [See Appendix B]

6. CLOSING THOUGHTS

6 a. CLOSING PRAYER

How grateful we are, God of all Creation, for the challenge and joy of being your church in this time and place. The words on these pages give shape to the life shared, the lessons and learning curves, the hopes held high and witness ever widening. Your resurrection story won't let us stay put, but asks us to carry memory forward into the unfolding future, resolute in love's purposes of healing, reconciliation, justice and peace. Sounds great, but gracious God have mercy, a big old call. Send your Spirit to fire us up and ignite all the passion and possibility we need to follow faithfully. Sharpen our sight to catch glimpses of your vision. Attune our ears to hear your Word of truth. Serving you with gladness makes such a gift of our days. Even as it takes many threads and loving hands to piece together a quilt, or others to fill a pot with food to nourish hungry neighbors, or many voices lifted together to make a choir singing praise upon praise, so it takes a vital community to be your church. And with all this, we need a pastor. We trust in you, Holy One, to let light illumine these pages and spark recognition of your call in the pastor who's been waiting for that nudge: a pastor for whom all these words somehow speak deeper meaning. The bright horizon beckons. Thank you for the gift of the new day dawning. Amen.

6b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT

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

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

1. Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile?
 - a. Profile Writing Team: Frank Baldwin (Chair), Bruce Bishop, Julie Blanchard, Bill Cunitz, Lindsay Fulmer, Phil Owen.
 - b. Profile Reviewers: Margaret Baldwin, Al Horn, Ann Laskey, Bunny Oliver
 - c. Designated Term Interim Pastor: Rev. Brigitta Remole
 - d. Church Council: Paul Adcock, Bruce Bishop (Treasurer), Bill Cunitz (V. Mod.), Paris Hancock (Mod.), Christina Hellums, Phil Owen (Past Mod.), Nanci Tangeman
 - e. Business Manager: Keith Powell
 - f. Communications Manager: April Alexander

2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:
 - a. Special thank you to Rev. Brigitta Remole for facilitating congregational reflection, transition, and discernment as our Designated Term Interim Pastor

Signed:



Paris Hancock, Moderator, July 19, 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:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tyler Connoley', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Name / Title: Tyler Connoley, Conference Minister

Email: tyler@cpccucc.org

Phone: 575-956-3316

Date: 8/1/23

APPENDIX A. FCUCC 2023 Budget

Ordinary Income/Expense	<u>Annual Budget</u>
Income	
4000 · Giving	
4050 · Pledges	108,000.00
4051 · General gifts	25,000.00
4052 · Flowers	900
4053 · Memorials and bequests	3,000.00
Total 4000 · Giving	<u>136,900.00</u>
4200 · Designated gifts	
4205 · Youth missions donations	600
4206 · Christian Ed - Youth	500
4210 · Choir donations	200
4212 · Eve's Circle	800
4216 · ArtReach	5,000.00
4217 · Beinvenidos Quilts	1,500.00
4218 · Other designated donations	1,000.00
Total 4200 · Designated gifts	<u>9,600.00</u>
4300 · Building income	
4301 · PCPA lease	357,500.00
4305 · Building rentals	30,000.00
4310 · Annex subleases	40,740.00
4315 · Weddings	3,000.00
Total 4300 · Building income	<u>431,240.00</u>
4400 · Grants	
4401 · Brown Grant #1	8,021.85
4402 · Brown Grant #2	110,000.00
4404 · UCC Team Global Hope	7,000.00
Total 4400 · Grants	<u>125,021.85</u>
4500 · In kind donations	0
4600 · Church sponsored activities	
4601 · Art Reach commissions	5,000.00
Total 4600 · Church sponsored activities	<u>5,000.00</u>
4700 · Interest income	0
Total Income	<u>707,761.85</u>
Gross Profit	<u>707,761.85</u>
Expense	
6000 · Community Core Ministry	
6009 · Called to Care	200
6010 · Community general	600
6016 · Music Education	1,100.00
6021 · Music Director / Organist	35,100.00

6023 · Choir leaders	21,400.00
6024 · Special Music	1,500.00
6026 · Organ Maintenance	350
6029 · Music supplies	500
6032 · Choir Parking	150
6035 · Eve's Circle expenses	800
expenses	597
6810 · Member parking	150
Total 6000 · Community Core Ministry	62,447.00
6050 · General worship	
6051 · Sub. preacher	1,500.00
6052 · Flowers expenses	900
6053 · Other worship expenses	1,000.00
6054 · Adaptive Church	15,000.00
Total 6050 · General worship	18,400.00
6070 · Christian education	
6071 · Chr. Ed. general account	1,500.00
6073 · Adult Education	2,000.00
6082 · Fam. retreat scholarships	200
6085 · Child Care Provider	2,000.00
Total 6070 · Christian education	5,700.00
6200 · Peace-making core ministry	
6201 · Peace-making general account	0
6202 · Local service projects	2,500.00
6203 · Our Church's Wider Mission	9,229.00
6204 · Pastor's disc. fund expenses	1,500.00
6205 · Open & Affirming expenses	500
6207 · Immigration Task Force	400
6208 · Bienvenidos Quilts	500
6209 · Team Global Hope	7,000.00
Total 6200 · Peace-making core ministry	21,629.00
6300 · Hospitality core ministry	
6301 · Hospitality gen. account	1,000.00
6302 · Sunday fellowship expenses	2,600.00
6350 · Church sponsored events	
6351 · Oliver Lecture	2,500.00
6352 · ArtReach Gallery	5,000.00
6360 · Other CSE's	1,000.00
Total 6350 · Church sponsored events	8,500.00
Total 6300 · Hospitality core ministry	12,100.00
6500 · Ministerial	
6501 · Sr. Min. Salary	78,218.50
6502 · Sr. Min. Housing	23,200.00
6503 · Sr. Min. SECA	7,758.52
6504 · Sr. Min. Health/dental	10,950.12
6505 · Sr. Min. Life/disability	0

6506 · Sr. Min. Pension	14,198.50
6507 · Sr. Min. expenses	2,717.00
6508 · Sr. Min. Continuing Ed.	0
6509 · Sr. Min. Transport exps.	3,000.00
6511 · Sr. Min. Auto expenses	2,500.00
Meetings	500
Total 6500 · Ministerial	143,042.64
6600 · Personnel expenses	
6610 · Reception Assistant	5,000.00
6611 · Office Coordinator	43,680.00
6613 · Facilities Manager	48,360.00
6614 · Custodians	14,820.00
6615 · Business Manager	68,000.00
66151 · Business Manager Pension	8,160.00
6616 · Staff Travel and parking	7,100.00
6617 · Staff health / dental insurance	29,000.00
6620 · Payroll/Tax Expense	23,000.00
6621 · Workers Comp Insurance	4,800.00
6622 · Graphic Designer	5,600.00
6623 · Event Coordinator	0
6624 · Sunday Tech Lead	20,000.00
6600 · Personnel expenses - Other	1,000.00
Total 6600 · Personnel expenses	278,520.00
6650 · Business Operations Expense	3,500.00
6700 · Building and rental expenses	
6701 · Building rentals	6,000.00
6702 · Wedding expenses	0
6703 · Annex expenses	1,000.00
Total 6700 · Building and rental expenses	7,000.00
6800 · Building/facility expenses	
6801 · Water	5,000.00
6802 · Gas	10,400.00
6803 · Electricity	9,700.00
6804 · Sanitation	10,400.00
6805 · Security	7,404.00
6806 · Repairs - ordinary	13,000.00
6807 · Repairs - major	30,000.00
6809 · Building & kitchen supplies	6,000.00
6811 · Elevator monitoring	3,000.00
Total 6800 · Building/facility expenses	94,904.00
6850 · Annex expenses	
6851 · Annex electricity	3,200.00
6852 · Annex security	600
6853 · Annex rent	42,184.00
Total 6850 · Annex expenses	45,984.00
6900 · Office Expenses	

	6901 · Office supplies	2,500.00
	6902 · Office Equip. Maint.	1,500.00
	6903 · Office Equip. Purch.	3,500.00
	6904 · Postage	700
	6905 · Printer lease expenses	8,000.00
	6906 · Web/telephone expenses	15,000.00
	Total 6900 · Office Expenses	31,200.00
	6950 · Other general expenses	
	6951 · Insurance	56,200.00
	6952 · Delegate Expenses	1,250.00
	6953 · Payroll service	2,500.00
	6954 · E-giving expenses	1,300.00
	6955 · Audit Review	12,000.00
	6956 · Bank charges	150
	6959 · Other prof. services	16,000.00
	Total 6950 · Other general expenses	89,400.00
	6960 · Dues and subscriptions	
	6961 · Conference per capita dues	3,250.00
	6962 · EMO Dues	300
	6964 · Licenses & permits	2,000.00
	6965 · Stewardship	1,000.00
	Total 6960 · Dues and subscriptions	6,550.00
	Total Expense	820,376.64
	Net Ordinary Income	-112,614.79
	Other Income/Expense	
	Other Income	
	9000 · Budgeted investment transfers	
	9005 · Knapp Fund transfer	2,906.00
	9015 · Oliver Lecture transfer	2,500.00
	9020 · Restr. Endow. transfer	2,432.00
	9025 · Reserve fund transfer	47,183.79
	9030 · Pastor's Disc. transfer	593
	9035 · Youth Mission transfer	0
	9040 · Building fund transfer	30,000.00
	9050 · Reserve Fund Youth Teacher Tran	0
	9055 · Reserve Fund Audit Transfer	12,000.00
	9060 · Reserve Transition Costs	0
	9065 · Adaptive Church	15,000.00
	Total 9000 · Budgeted investment transfers	112,614.79
	Total Other Income	112,614.79
	Net Other Income	112,614.79
		0



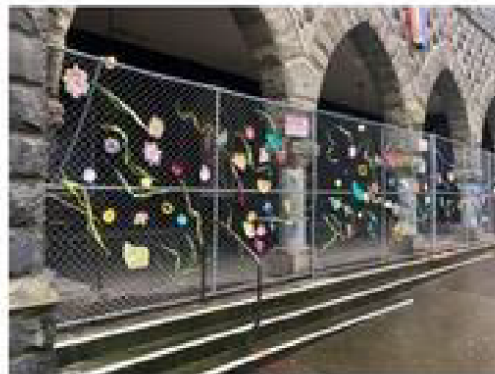
THE CHURCH "AS BUILT" IN 1895



PORTLAND
AND
MOUNT HOOD



FELLOWSHIP TIME



TEMPORARY PORTICO FENCE

APPENDIX B. REFERENCES

Rev. Dr. Patricia Ross

Retired Clergy – Pastor Emerita of Portland First Congregational United Church of Christ

Currently a member of Cedar Hills United Church of Christ

Telephone Numbers: (503) 255 – 6068 (Home), (503) 926 – 4152 (Cell)

Email address: pat-ross@comcast.net

Reference for First Congregational United Church of Christ, Portland Oregon

Areas of Strength in this church’s ministry:

- Perseverance: This church started when Portland was nicknamed “Stumptown” due to its abundance of trees- and mud. The first clergyman sent by the Board of Ministry found himself facing a cold wet winter- no parsonage or church building. So he got the people together and worked with them to build a church and a school. He raised money and worked tirelessly. Unfortunately, his East coast education had taught him a style of preaching that was not what the west coast congregation wanted. So, they fired him after about two years, and they were off to the races. How is this a strength? The strength part came after this as they got Bible class going and started looking for a new minister. In the 172 years since that bumpy start the church has had twenty lead pastors. Some have served short terms, and some longer terms. With each change there have been some members who stayed and some who left—but always a steadfast core of people stayed around to ask, “what happened?” And then to look for a new pastor. In addition, the church has built three buildings. Work on the current building had to be suspended for a time during the depression. The money was not there. In time members stepped up with grace, cash, and work to finish the current church and to keep the buildings remodeled and repaired as needed.
- Worship: Worship has always been an important element in the ministry of this church. Clergy work to prepare sermons, prayers, and times to be open to God’s words in moments of silence. Music is vital to the church. For the last twenty plus years Grant Edwards has chosen musical offerings which enhance worship, prepared the choir, and brought glorious music from the old—but well cared for—organ. Piano, jazz, and folk music have also been part of worship. The stained glass and polished wood of the sanctuary adds to the worship experience.
- Respect in the Community: Over the years the congregation earned the respect of the community as it stood up against the Oregon expression of the KKK, stood for the rights of labor, women, Farmer workers, African Americans, and LGBTQ people, and fought

against many kinds of bigotry and corruption in the city. It also became a gathering place for the community to grieve after 9/11; for women to come together to discuss women's health care, domestic violence survivors came to support one another and church and community members came to discuss secular, as well as faith issues under the auspices of the Oliver Lectures. In the past the church has opened its doors to houseless youth on an emergency basis in cold weather; houseless veterans, has provided lunches and programs for the elderly in cooperation with Northwest Pilot project and served as a first aid station during recent protests.

- Areas Where the Church Could Stand to Improve: Conflict has been part of the life of this church and every church I know of. Conflict is not always bad. A good clean argument can clarify an issue. Constructive criticism can lead to better understanding, planning, or sermons. But unhealthy conflict—when loud voices drown out quieter voices, or when communication is indirect, petty issues refuse to be resolved, leadership is blamed for problems which may be no one person's fault—such discussions can drain the life and energy from the community. Fortunately, while this church has struggled with these issues—several recent trained interims and thoughtful discussions among members seem to be lessening this tendency.
- A Significant Experience I had with this Congregation: On four or so occasions the church was invited to host graduations for classes of women from the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility who had completed a course of study designed to prepare them for the time after they would be released. The graduation ceremonies took place in the Sanctuary, and it was lovely to see the pride on the faces of the women as they received certificates of completion for their work. But the most amazing part of these events happened after the formal event when the celebration was held. The organizers asked us to provide a separate table for each graduate and her family and friends. The Fellowship Hall was filled with fifteen to twenty round tables—each of them set with table cloths, flowers and a separate cake for each woman to share with her family. As the graduates entered the hall they were greeted by children, teens, grandmothers (many of whom had been caring for the children during the women's incarcerations) and other supporters. Soon church members brought out platters of food, pitchers of punch and milk. There was eating, laughing, little ones running around, mothers holding young children they had not been close to for months. It was so much work—cooking, serving, cleaning up—to be honest I was shy about asking church members to work so hard—but each time as we saw the women board buses back to the facility and dragged our aching feet back into the church, I saw tears and smiles on many faces. Women, men, church staff, everyone pulled together and talked about the hope and happiness they had observed.

- Last Words: The world has changed, Portland has changed, churches have changed since I retired in 2008. The challenges to being a church, now and into the future, are large. That's why I started my comments with Stumptown. No one wants to repeat history. Instead, the hope is that the church and community will find new ways to face the challenges ahead just as the first members of this church did in their time. One of my older colleagues used to say, Portland First is a good church. I agree, because I see a church blessed with many fine people doing their best to serve Jesus Christ in this time and place.

July 25th, 2023

Greetings Colleague(s) in Ministry,

It is a pleasure to provide this reflection at the request of the First Congregational United Church of Christ of Portland (Portland First) through this letter of reference. I am not a member of Portland First but consider myself to be a close friend and ministry partner. As an active member of the UCC, I have served as a board volunteer and officer in the national setting, a committee and board member of the Central Pacific Conference, and as a leader in my local church Ainsworth UCC located in Northeast Portland. It is in these capacities that I have had the opportunity to journey in ministry with Portland First Congregational UCC in a variety of ways.

As a church located in the heart of central downtown, as the social culture and context has evolved through the years, Portland First continues to boldly claim their identity as people of faith and members of the neighborhood. I consider Portland First to be a courageous presence in ministries of compassion, inclusion, justice, and public witness. However, their ministry is not limited to this specific location or even within the local area. It expands nationally and globally.

The social context and location of Portland First has presented benefits and challenges to the congregation through the years. Like other houses of worship in a downtown environment, many of it's members do not live near the church, so commuting to worship and church activities is more the norm. This can create barriers to participation, most significantly to people with limited transportation options and families with young children. In addition, the primary leadership of Portland First has remained consistent for many years, many of whom are ordained clergy persons. As a clergyperson myself sitting in the pews, I am acutely aware of the potential for lay persons to feel excluded.

I have had many opportunities to be in ministry with individual members of the congregation and the congregation itself. I cannot name them all, so I will describe two significant times when I was deeply moved by the generosity and faithful commitment that the congregation has demonstrated.

Several years ago, Portland First was hosting a program in their building to serve persons without housing and/or food security. It was at a time when the footprint of the theater district was rapidly expanding, and patrons were expressing discomfort with the people lined up along

sidewalks for needed services of support. Complaints surfaced from theater owners regarding the church's ministry, some of whom lease land from the church on which their buildings stand. The church had to take legal action to preserve their right to demonstrate their mission and values, as they had respected the theaters' right to do the same. The church prevailed sending a significant message that our Christian mission to accompany the less fortunate cannot be compromised.

The second is recent. Portland First is an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation, a designation of the United Church of Christ. Several congregation leaders are actively involved in the Central Pacific Conference Immigrant Welcoming Network. Recently, the church hosted a gathering of the entire network in their fellowship hall to welcome a national staff person who was visiting our region. Included in Portland First's ministry is a group producing small comforts for migrant children. They have contributed dozens of these comforters to detention centers, primarily on the border between the US and Mexico. At the evening gathering, we were all blessed by the presence of an asylum-seeking family being accompanied by my local congregation (Ainsworth UCC). A comforter was presented to the two-year old child of our partner family and received with her smile and screech of delight! It brought tears of joy and delight to the entire community gathered that evening!

I consider it a blessing to be a friend and ministry companion with First Congregational United Church of Christ of Portland. I am available and welcome further conversation.

In solidarity,

The Rev. Linda Jaramillo
Member of Ainsworth United Church of Christ
mlindajaramillo@gmail.com
(216) 287 – 5953

Gregory McMahon, Bass Section Leader

Phone Number: (971) 297 – 5862

Email Address: gregmcmahon313@gmail.com

- Describe Areas of Strength in the Church's Ministry: The music program has remained a constant strength during my time at FCC (since 2007). The choir is a source of community and fellowship for so many in the congregation. Grant Edwards provides a warm and supportive environment for music making, meeting choir members' abilities where they are and coaxing them (gently!) to heights that they wouldn't have otherwise dreamed of achieving. The solos and other musical offerings by the paid staff are of a very high quality and are deeply appreciated by the congregation.
- Describe Some Areas of for Improvement in this Ministry: Unlike our other major Art Outreach initiatives (ArtReach Gallery, et.al.), the music ministry is only available to the public via attendance at a service. Why should one of our best calling cards and greatest strengths be one of our least public and most inaccessible? Greater efforts should be made to publicize the good work that is being done by our music ministry, be that holding public concerts outside of services, or something even as simple as compilation videos highlighting the music made during the prior month's Sunday services. And to that end, the Music Minister must have a dedicated assistant. Perhaps this assistant begins as a volunteer position (5 – 10 hours a week), but it is imperative that the Music Minister has the kind of logistical and clerical support that would allow them to focus their talents on their core responsibilities of music making!
- Describe a Significant Experience you have had of this Church's Ministry: The only reason that I sing today is because of the start that I received in this church choir. Singing has literally taken me all over the world and given me musical opportunities that I could never dream of. And singing, for me, started as a member of the choir. My life's experiences would be significantly smaller if not for this ministry.
- Anything Else you'd Wish to Share: This church, and its music ministry, hold a special and significant place in my life. It has impacted me and my family in ways that I could have never imagined. And, while I know that my story cannot be representative of everyone's experiences, I'd like to think that every person connected to the church has a similar story. I look forward to the many years of congregational storytelling to come!

Religion Outside the Box

Address: 3835 NE Hancock
Suite 201
Portland, Oregon 97212

Reference Information: Re: Local Church Profile

Rabbi Brian Zachary Mayer
Phone Number: (503) 908 – 4472
Email address: rabbi_brian@rotb.org

July 18th, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

The most important two things I can say are: (1) I like the folk at FCUCC and (2) their hearts are in the right place. (Of course, this is dependent upon your views of a church making a rabbi feel welcome and like part of the family.)

I was introduced to FCUCC as it was the first gathering place/home of the Portland Interfaith Clergy Resistance and in the wake of the 2016 election. I have returned to run Jewish High Holy Day services and to give talks. Always welcomed by the clergy and the staff.

I like this place.

I'm here to help. Ask if you have questions. . . .

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rabbi Brian Zachary Mayer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rabbi Brian Zachary Mayer

REFERENCE

Rev. Dr. Janet Parker

UCC Pastor in the Central Pacific Conference (just concluded interim at Smyrna UCC, Canby)

Phone Number: (503) 974 – 4166

Email Address: revjanpark@gmail.com

Former Interim Minister at First Congregational UCC, Portland

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

In no particular order of priority, I would name some of this congregation's strengths as follows.

- A willingness to continue pushing the edges of their understanding and practice of the UCC's value of extravagant hospitality. When a member of the church who was a candidate for ordination in the conference came out as both polyamorous and transgender, First Portland rose to the occasion, striving to listen to and understand this person's lived experience and supporting their candidacy for ordained ministry. This person was invited to preach, lead worship and lead adult forums on numerous occasions. Subsequently, the church hired a part-time staff person in the children's ministry who identified as gender non-binary and uses they/them pronouns. I love the fact that FCUCC doesn't rest on past understandings of what it means to be LGBTQ+ affirming, or an Open and Affirming congregation, but seeks to continually update and improve its practice of extravagant welcome to this population.
- First Congregational UCC stands out even among the big steeple churches in the Portland metro area for its excellence in music and the arts. The congregation enjoys an outstanding musical program under the talented direction of Grant Edwards. In addition to providing transcendent music for worship every week, Grant also brings his talents to the broader community, elevating the profile of the church in the local community and benefiting many outside the church. Grant's gifts include creative composition as well as virtuosity on the organ and in choral direction. He created and conducted the oratorio "Letters from Emily" at First Congregational UCC in 2019. This oratorio set the poetry of Emily Dickinson to music for the Locus Iste Concert Choir. Hearing "Letters from Emily" in the FCUCC sanctuary was one of the best musical experiences I've ever had, inside or outside of a church.

- Having no less than 19 retired and non-parish clergy in the congregation is an enormous strength... and can be a bit of a challenge for a pastor who's not prepared for this wealth of clergy colleagues in the congregation. As a strength, there's a ready made stable of gifted and theologically trained leaders, most of whom are eager to share their gifts and energy with the congregation. Over the course of my interim ministry, it became clear to me that this both sets this congregation apart from others and requires skill, sensitivity, and self-confidence on the part of the settled pastor to manage well. For an insecure pastor, this can be challenging. But for a pastor secure in their own ministry and able to negotiate appropriate boundaries with colleagues who are also members of the church, it provides an enormous boon.
- Finally, though I could name other strengths, I want to lift the resilience of this congregation. As the local church profile beautifully expresses, the congregation has been on a roller coaster ride with settled pastors coming and going over the last decade plus. The level of pastoral upheaval that First Portland has gone through would have broken or divided lesser churches. Although I was completely heartbroken at the breakdown that happened with the last settled pastor's medical leave and unexpected departure, I have been so impressed with the grace, resilience, and determination of the congregation to learn from all this pastoral upheaval and to grow stronger. I believe that the congregation that exists now has the maturity, wisdom, motivation, and strengths to grow and thrive in coming years, with the right pastoral leader.

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

- I was heartened to read in the draft profile: "We want to be a community in which no one person is responsible for everything but rather where our skills and competencies complement and backup one another." One gift or silver lining of the revolving door of pastoral leadership in recent years has been the need for the congregation to find within itself the resources, talent and leadership required to sustain the church's ministry. I believe this has imparted a valuable lesson to the congregation, which is to help the church live into the polity ideals of UCC and Reformed theology—the principle of the priesthood of all believers and the responsibility of the members for the ministry of the church. There **may** have been a tendency in recent years to call pastors with a BIG personality, professional profile, and charisma to fit the image the congregation has had of itself as one of the prominent, big steeple churches in downtown Portland. While this can work for many churches, for whatever reason (perhaps in part relating to the

highly gifted and assertive lay leaders within the church, many of whom are retired pastors) this hasn't worked as well for First Portland. I am heartened to see that the congregation is recognizing that they have within themselves great gifts for ministry and leadership, and that they will most likely do best with a pastor who is highly collaborative, a great listener, effective at team ministry (not a lone ranger), supportive rather than directive, and secure enough to learn from constructive criticism.

- Like other churches in the downtown core of Portland, FCUCC has struggled to know how to live in healthy and supportive relationships with the houseless population, the mentally ill population, and the drug addicted population that make downtown Portland their home. The church has a great heart for people and has demonstrated its desire to support these challenged populations but has not quite found its footing. I'm delighted to see that the church is now focusing on growing their connections to other institutions and groups within the downtown core so that they can work with others to find appropriate ways to minister to these populations more effectively.
- Retaining quality staff has been a challenge for the congregation. For whatever reason, there has been a high degree of turnover in the lay staff of the church in the past decade or so. My hope for the church would be that, despite the challenges all employers and institutions face these days in hiring and retaining good staff, the congregation will be able to stabilize its staff, which will help with the overall sense of stability in the congregation.

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

- An experience that stands out to me relates to the congregation's willingness to respond effectively and in real time to a pressing need in the community. During the 2020 Black Lives Matter protest in Portland, the epicenter was just a few blocks from the church. Some of those involved in the protest approached our church administrator about opening the church up as a respite center for the protesters. She pulled together a small team of volunteers and together we proposed to the church council opening the building several hours each evening for the most active nights of the protests each week. I was so proud of the fact that the church council approved the plan. The church partnered with street medics, organizations that brought in food, even volunteer counselors and music therapists to provide much needed care for the protesters—mostly young adults who did not attend church. Each night the respite center opened; we had volunteers from the church present as well as staff support. We also were clear

that this was a safe zone, a sanctuary in the historic sense, from police incursions. The congregation was supportive of this endeavor though it was not without risk. It could have made our building or congregation a target. This experience demonstrated a unique way in which First Congregational UCC extended the radical hospitality of Jesus while serving as a witness to Christ's passion for justice.

Anything else you wish to share.

- Hopefully it is clear that I am one of First Congregational UCC's biggest fans. I love this congregation and believe it does great ministry, with enormous potential to grow in its impact in people's lives and in the wider community.

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

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

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

