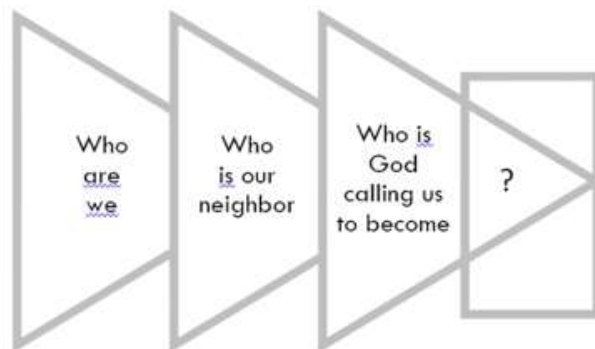


Search and Call Tools for Congregations

Advancing the Spirit's guidance into God's future



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

MINISTERIAL EXCELLENCE,
SUPPORT & AUTHORIZATION

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
United Church Of Christ



Loving God. Loving Neighbor. Building Community.

Union Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Montclair, NJ 07043

Minister for Pastoral Care and Faith Formation

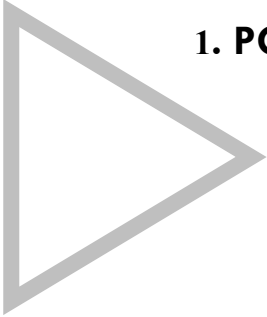
Central Atlantic Conference
New Jersey Association

Validated March 20, 2024

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

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

1a. LISTING INFORMATION

Church name: Union Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

Street address: 176 Cooper Avenue, Montclair, NJ 07043

Supplemental web links: <https://www.unioncong.org/>

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

Conference: Central Atlantic Conference

Association: New Jersey

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

Rev. Craig Peterson

Associate Conference Minister for Congregational Development

Conference Support to the New Jersey Association

Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ
(747) 888-8349 cell
cpeterson@cacucc.org



Summary Ministry Description:

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

Union Congregational Church is a strong, committed congregation seeking a Minister of Pastoral Care and Faith Formation to partner with us and our Lead Minister to grow in vitality in our next phase of life. We are active in our wider community - seeking to follow Christ in loving without condition, seeking justice and equal treatment for the disempowered, and working to meet the spiritual needs of all. We are in the midst of living into recent visioning work that has us asking questions about how to use our campus resources to better reflect the size of our congregation and have a deeper impact on the needs of the community. We are an Open and Affirming Congregation that values being a place where people can connect with God, grow in faith, wrestle with scripture, and use their gifts for ministry. Montclair is a beautiful, diverse, and progressive town, close to New York City and with its own cultural and entertainment scene and reputable school system. Created with significant input from the congregation and in concert with our Lead Minister, this position will have considerable autonomy within defined areas of responsibility, while still reporting to the Lead Minister. The ideal candidate will be creative, responsive, and collaborative. This is an opportunity to shape your own role within an energetic, well-resourced congregation that is actively exploring where God is calling them.

Photographs:

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



(photo: Children with Heritage Members. Heritage Members are members of the congregation who have been members of the church for forty years or more)



(clockwise from top left: Confirmation class, community garden with Northeast Earth Coalition, church members at Pride booth, daytime Bible study group celebrating a member's 94th birthday, Men At Union group assemble holiday greens and hang them on the tower, congregational members supporting Maui emergency, children in Learning Centers, Montclair Foundation For Educational Excellence in attendance to receive check from church's Christmas offering helping offset the cost of a van that will help transport Spanish-speaking students to after school programs.



(top to bottom: exterior photos of church campus)



(top to bottom: music program adult choir, sometimes select orchestra, church celebrates being a founding member Essex Together - focus on criminal justice reform, housing, education, and green energy, full house for inaugural LGBTQ+ inclusive community Pride Choir concert - in collaboration with church and out Montclair)

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

Many of us value both the proximity of our church to New York City and the local presence of an active, engaged community in Montclair and surrounding areas, providing a hometown feel that also has a broader community perspective and city amenities (excellent restaurants!). We appreciate living in a community and participating in a congregation that values and strives for diversity (though we also recognize we fall short). Another asset for Union is the strong arts community and appreciation for the arts and music in our area.

Languages used in ministry (other than English): N/A

Position Title: Minister for Pastoral Care and Faith Formation

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

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

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

Full Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines?

Yes

1b. SCOPE OF WORK

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

Primary areas of responsibility:

Created with significant input from the congregation and in concert with our Lead Minister, this position will have considerable autonomy within defined areas of responsibility, while still reporting to the Lead Minister. The ideal candidate will be creative, responsive, and collaborative. This is an opportunity to shape your own role within an energetic, well-resourced congregation that is actively exploring where God is calling them. Key responsibilities include:

- Children’s Faith Formation - including developing programming (curriculum choices, etc.) for Learning Centers and family events, supervising Learning Center and Childcare staff, and building relationships with families.
- Pastoral Care - including primary responsibility for visitation of homebound members and others to whom regular visits would be expected, working with the Congregational Care Ministry Team, and collaborating with the Lead Minister to respond to other pastoral care needs and provide proactive pastoral care to the congregation.

- Adult Faith Formation - including regular attendance of one weekly Bible Study, and development of other adult education opportunities in collaboration with the Lead Minister.
- Congregational Connection - supporting small groups, ministry teams and congregants to create opportunities for regular fellowship and congregational connection in collaboration with the Lead Minister.
- Lead worship regularly - preaching about once a month with additional opportunities as desired and the need may arise.

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

Note: Two primary responsibilities of this role are pastoral care and children's programming, so many of the competencies here are related to those tasks, and these will also be important for other responsibilities.

- Shows compassion
- Listens well
- Curious and thoughtful
- Sociable - our congregation has a strong desire for the minister to know them outside the worship service and to attend many church activities
- Able to connect with individuals of all ages
- Patience and a sense of humor
- Flexibility and a willingness to embrace new ideas and directions, as discerned by the congregation

1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

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

The salary basis is \$90,964, including \$65,000 salary, \$19,500 value of housing provided at our parsonage (30% of salary) and \$6,464 FICA offset (7.65% of salary + housing value).

Benefits:

Salary plus Benefits

- Union pays full cost of PBUCC health insurance premiums (~\$15,086 value per year)
- Union contributes 14% of the minister's salary basis to PBUCC Annuity Plan (~\$12,735 value per year)
- Life/Disability insurance premium = ~\$1,364 per year
- Dental Insurance premium = ~\$1,215 per year
- Vision Insurance premium = ~\$273 per year
- 3-month sabbatical after each 5 years of service, with some flexibility TBD (equivalent to ~\$3,573 value per year)
- Reimbursements available for Continuing Ed & Publications (up to \$2,000 per year) and Hospitality (up to \$2,000 per year)

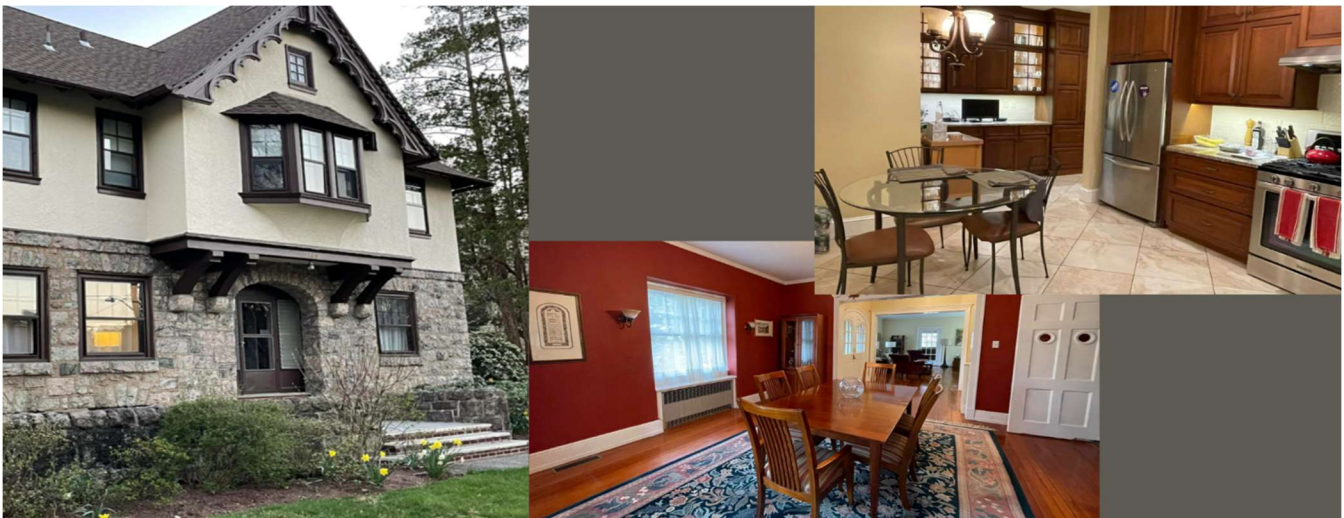
Total Compensation package valued at ~\$102,137, *not including* housing value, sabbatical, or reimbursements.

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

We expect the minister will reside in a parsonage on our campus.

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

As noted, the parsonage is on our campus and thus requires almost no commute time for getting to the church sanctuary or offices. There will be a need for some local travel, using your personal vehicle, to conduct pastoral care visits and for some youth and other church events and activities.



(parsonage - exterior, dining room, kitchen)

State any incentives (e.g. school debt reduction or retention bonus after a certain number of years in position): None.

Describe peer and professional supports available for ministers in your association/conference: Communities of Practice, monthly clergy lunches, local clergy association, in addition to continuing ed support for coaching.

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

We expect this minister to work full time for Union Congregational Church. No adjustments for other employment.

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.

Our long-term ambitions [strategic objectives] are:

Right Sized, Aligned Resources

Our intent is to have purposeful impact on the lives of our members, friends, their families, and the broader community through the intentional and comprehensive use of our resources. To do this effectively we are working to ensure our resources are sized appropriately to support our strategy and missional priorities and are consistent with long-term financial stability and sustainability. We strive to have our physical campus, our staff, clergy, financial assets, and volunteer time all operating optimally and in harmony, thereby maximizing our impact and effectiveness. The discussion about right-sizing and aligning resources is ongoing, and there are different views within the congregation about how best to achieve these objectives. It will require flexibility and creativity from the ministerial staff to help bring about consensus and move forward on specific implementations of these goals.

Agile Programming and Facilities

To become a “thriving, imaginative community hub,” - an aspiration affirmed by the congregation in our Foundational Vision in 2022 - we are committed to remaining relevant to those we serve while always reflecting God’s still-speaking voice. In that spirit we embrace thoughtful adaptation in all we do and maintain, including worship and non-worship programming and our physical assets (i.e., buildings and property). Such adaptations could include expanding our musical offerings, enhancing building accessibility, or targeting specific audiences to name but a few. Our intent is to create and nurture a welcoming

atmosphere of joy, fellowship, and exploration, maximizing attendance and spiritual connection.

Quality of Engagement

Our Statement of Purpose calls us to “welcome and celebrate God’s people.” In that spirit, we greet and welcome people as they are, no matter where they are on life’s journey. We support them in identifying and serving through their unique gifts and passions. We strive to ensure that every person feels seen, heard, and valued. We cultivate diverse and accessible experiences in which everyone can participate, contribute, and experience the transformative power of serving from the heart.

Practicing & Modeling Environmental Sustainability

Our Statement of Purpose calls on us to, “honor the environment as God’s sacred creation.” As such we integrate long-term sustainability considerations into all we do including our church’s operations and asset management. We steward wisely, honoring our responsibility to care for this earth for the generations yet to come. Because of this commitment, we seek to learn from others and empower others to join us in creating ever more thoughtful and sustainable ways of being and doing.

Measurable Growth

Growth is necessary to ensure our longevity and continued impact. We measure our church’s growth internally by numbers of engaged members, attendance at worship and events, and core financial metrics. We measure our impact externally based on the quantity and quality of our partnerships, and outcomes and outputs of our initiatives in service of our purpose and vision. We celebrate progress and milestones, recognizing that every step forward aligns us more thoroughly with our Foundational Vision. Knowing that we cannot “save our way to growth,” we invest our time and treasure to enhance our impact and growth.

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

Statement on Leadership in Ministry

We seek to follow the example of Jesus as we travel together on our faith journey, caring for and supporting one another as we reach out to the wider community and world. Our Minister will help us understand how Jesus would live and want us to live in today’s complicated world. Although we come from a variety of faith backgrounds and experiences, we are united in our desire to both understand God’s purpose for our lives and act on our understanding.

Vision and Inspiration

Our Minister will work with our Lead Minister to share her vision of church in the 21st century, helping our congregation cope with the secular shift away from the historic centering of church in community life. It is critical that this individual help us develop a church experience that is relevant and appealing to all generations in today's society, while still grounded in historical teaching.

Compassion and Collaboration

We are an active congregation with a broad range of programs and activities aimed at educating and nurturing throughout life. Our programs are a collaboration of efforts by clergy, members, and friends of the church. We look to clergy for inspiration, energy, vision, and organization with these programs, which are dynamic and grow to match changing needs. Many of our members are busy with their work and with their families and are often challenged to find time for church events. We seek a Minister who will help inspire and motivate us to be involved in programs and activities. Our Minister will also be a compassionate and caring individual who will minister effectively to people in difficult situations.

Nurturing our Minds and Souls

We are a community that is eager to learn about the world and expand our horizons. Educational activities are welcomed and are usually well attended by both adults and youth. We seek a leader to provide vision for educational programs and experiences that help us understand the issues facing the world in relation to our faith. In addition, our congregation includes many members and friends who are involved in the arts; their talents are reflected in our active music and drama programs. We see the arts as a means for praise and celebration, and to touch our emotions. We seek a minister with imagination, spirit, and energy who will encourage these activities.

Collegiality and Leadership

Recognizing the many needs of our congregation, we seek a team player who works well with colleagues, is centered and secure, and has a good sense of humor.

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

We are an English-speaking congregation, and English is the first language for a substantial majority of our members.

One of our key missional priorities is to address issues related to racial justice and gender equity and expression. We are an Open and Affirming Congregation, and we sponsor a regional Pride Choir. Our membership includes several interracial families. The successful

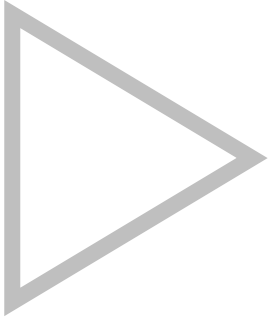
candidate will encourage, support, and deepen our work in racial justice and gender equity and expression.

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.

We will look to this Minister to guide faith formation among both children and adults, and to provide pastoral care. Our members come from different faith traditions, and we recognize that we bring different assumptions and different levels of interest in developing our faith journeys. We currently have two active study groups, one of which seeks insights and sharing through reading books about spiritual practice and the Christian tradition, while the other group focuses on discussion of scripture. We expect our Minister to 1) **"exhibit a spiritual foundation and ongoing spiritual practices"** to support and guide the creation of educational programs and discussion groups, 2) draw on skill in **"engaging sacred stories and traditions"** to lead faith formation across generations, and 3) **"strengthen inter- and intra- personal assets"** in developing lessons and activities for children, encouraging opportunities for lifelong spiritual development, and leading pastoral care efforts.

Our congregation also places a high value on pastoral care for all ages and especially members prevented by age or infirmity from joining us in person for worship and community gatherings. Working with our Lead Minister, our Minister will **"care for all creation"** while aiming to provide hope and healing to a hurting world. Our Minister's capacity for practicing self-care and maintaining life balance will be essential for nurturing compassion for and among members and friends of our church and people in our wider community.





2. WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME?

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37 NRSV)

Who is God calling you to become as a congregation?

We believe God is calling us into relationship – to worship God and honor God's creation; to be good stewards of God's creation and our resources; to gather in community guided by the Spirit; and to follow Christ in engaging with our neighbors, in and beyond Montclair, by advocating for social justice.

We acknowledge that this call, as old as the two great commandments and as fresh as the new day, can be challenging to hear and respond to in our increasingly polarized and secular society. We affirm our ongoing need for deep and reflective worship, close engagement with sacred texts, and guided opportunities for spiritual growth and insight.

We strive to be an inclusive and caring congregation, deeply attentive to the needs of others and warm in our welcome to all, no matter who they are or where they are on life's journey. We endeavor to address individual suffering and systemic oppression, with particular focus on racial justice and gender equity and expression.

Our congregation adopted three **Missional Priorities** for 2023-2024 (approved by the congregation on April 23, 2023):

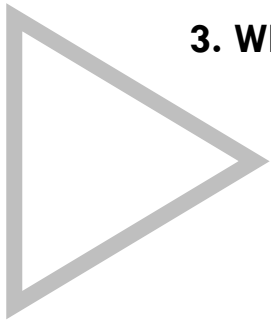
1. Begin to implement a plan to make our campus, especially the main building and including the sanctuary, accessible, welcoming and more widely usable for the church and wider community.
2. Deepen our commitment to racial justice through developing a Racial Justice Ministry Team, building and deepening relationships with local organizations that share that goal, and engaging in education and spiritual growth through a lens of racial justice.
3. Develop a clear sense of identity and share that with the wider community.

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

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

- 1) After the onset of the COVID pandemic, the congregation undertook a strategic visioning process that has resulted in a) a new governance structure featuring shared leadership, a smaller governing board, and ministry teams; b) adoption of missional priorities; c) a fresh look at campus resources; and d) development of financial health principles.
- 2) To provide context for our campus use discussion, especially the possible renovation of our sanctuary, our clergy experimented with alternative worship and flexible seating in our chapel over the summer months.
- 3) We have expanded our work with the LGBTQ+ community, including sponsoring and staffing a booth for PRIDE month activities, hosting a new Pride Choir for northern New Jersey, and hosting a support group for parents of trans youths.
- 4) A new challenge facing the congregation in the coming 8 months is to decide if we can continue the Nursery School. Union's Nursery School has been a respected Montclair institution for over 50 years and members are naturally proud of it and devoted to its educational methodology. However, the town is in the process of implementing a plan for universal pre-k over the next few years. In the coming months, we must decide as a congregation whether and how to continue our Nursery School. This will be an emotional decision for the congregation.





3. WHO ARE WE NOW?

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

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

3a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS

Describe your congregation’s life of faith.

For example, what beliefs and commitments are stated in your congregation’s purpose statement or membership vows? How is God most often described in worship liturgy?

In what ways would you describe the Holy Spirit in your midst?

Our full Statement of Purpose, presented below, was approved by the congregation in 2018 and guides our annual goal-setting as well as how we approach new challenges. We are also currently working on a one-sentence mission/vision statement.

Statement of Purpose

As Christians and as members of Union Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, we believe it is our purpose and calling to...

- **grow** in relationship with God and neighbor through communal worship, fellowship, mutual respect, prayer, and service;
- **empower** each other, across generations, to discern Christian truth and meaning using a variety of sources;
- **welcome** and celebrate God’s people, and affirm the many images of the Divine manifested in differing abilities and disabilities, ages, gender expressions, gender identities, sexual orientations, faith traditions, social and economic classes, ethnicities, colors, races, immigration statuses, and nationalities
- **minister** to others using our spiritual gifts and financial resources ethically, mindfully, and creatively;
- **work** to recognize and relieve systemic oppression, individual suffering, poverty, and isolation, through dialogue, action, and partnership with other religious and secular organizations;

- **honor** the environment as God’s sacred creation, worthy of praise and protection;
- **reflect** the love and grace of God in all that we do, joyous in Christ and grateful in the Spirit.

We attempt to avoid patriarchal language when referring to God. We begin the Lord’s Prayer with “Our Creator…” although we invite worshippers to use their preferred name for God. We drew on womanist liturgy and readings during our Sunday services over the past year. We generally refer to the Holy Spirit as “Spirit.” We sing the following doxology:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
 Praise God, all creatures here below;
 Praise God for all that love has done;
 Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

We are committed to our mission, engaged in our community, and involved in church programs. Our members share their talents and expertise spanning a broad range of professions, including the arts, finance, education, medicine, business, and many others. We share these talents and energy in our faith community in union with one another and God.

We have well-maintained facilities and an endowment (managed with social investment objectives) that contributes to annual operating costs.

We have initiated multi-church partnerships for confirmation classes and middle and high school youth activities. We organize youth service trips each summer. We place a high priority on social justice and outreach efforts. We are currently looking into how we might convert a building on our campus to a design that would better serve the broader community.

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

For example, where does worship take place, and what is it based around? What was a recent baptism like? What are some words used to describe good preaching?

We gather for weekly worship at 10:00am each Sunday in our sanctuary for prayer, scripture, music, and sermon; we pass the peace, have a “Message for all Ages” talk with children, and share joys and concerns. Over the past year, we have followed a womanist lectionary. Children are often invited forward to become part of baptismal ceremonies. We celebrate communion monthly by intinction, with gluten- and nut-free bread and grape juice; we have moved our communion table from the chancel to the same level as the congregation; all are invited to participate in communion.

We value music from various traditions, with piano, organ, or instrumental accompaniment. Our choir is supplemented by paid section leaders; choir members do not wear robes. Most of the music we sing as a congregation is from our hymnals and largely traditional. Occasionally, our adult and youth choirs and our instrumentalists will feature more modern selections.

Our congregation values strong preaching anchored in sacred text and connected to current conditions. We like to be challenged to think about a text in a new way- to be connected to current events while shying away from partisanship. We value delivery that is engaging and warm.

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

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

Our educational/faith formation programs are in a time of transition, following the retirement of our long-time church educator two years ago. In this interim period, we've experimented with a structural change to the programs - more on this below - while also engaging in discernment about the type of person who might best fit the role. We believe the congregation would be best served by someone with a passion for and a background in progressive Christian Education. We can describe these programs by age groups:

Birth through elementary: We value creating safe spaces for our youngest people to form a positive relationship with church. Our preschool children are lovingly cared for by paid staff. Elementary aged kids begin Sunday morning in the sanctuary, participating in the first part of our worship service. It is important to us that they share the sacraments and begin developing the vocabulary of worship. Following a "Message for All Ages" on the chancel steps usually delivered by one of our ministers, they go to Learning Centers (a one-room Sunday School class, which uses a progressive Christian curriculum). We know that we need help to revitalize our ministry for our youngest congregants, including how to better build intergenerational worship, education that is age-appropriate and teaches the lessons and values of our theology, and how to build ministry with the whole family.

Middle and High School: Our older students join us in the sanctuary every Sunday for the entirety of the worship service. To provide opportunities for regular youth engagement, we helped start a multi-church youth group this year that brings teens from 5 different churches together for service and fellowship every other Sunday. There is still work to be done for this program in developing programming that helps teens connect with God or articulate their authentic faith journeys. The program is currently searching to hire a Coordinator of Youth Ministry.

In addition, over the last three years, we have rebuilt our Confirmation program. We work jointly with another UCC church to provide 8th and 9th graders with an opportunity to step

out of the faith of childhood and claim their faith as their own. Currently, we run the Confirmation program every other year, because the cohorts are small, and this can be adjusted if/as larger cohorts develop.

In recent years, our youth group has undertaken an educational trip to Montgomery, Memphis and other Civil Rights sites to learn about racial justice and faith, and participated in service trips to Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere.

Youth leadership is a value the congregation takes seriously. We have youth representatives serving on our Governing Board, search committees, ministry teams, and also reading scripture and leading in worship. Youths also participate in serving communion.

Adults: We have two active Bible studies, which each pick their own topics/readings. One often uses a guide like Barbara Essex' Bad Girls of the Bible or Amy Jill-Levine's Entering the Passion of Jesus. The other tends towards starting with a specific Biblical book and discussing the text directly. Our clergy also offer regular Adult Ed programming. This past year that has included a series based on America's Unholy Ghosts about the racist roots of US politics and religion, and Otis Moss' Dancing in the Darkness to draw out spiritual practices for Advent.



(youth volunteering at food insecurity non-profits)

Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

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

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

We implemented a new governance structure in 2023, with a 9-member Governing Board (moderator, vice-moderator, treasurer, secretary, four at-large, and one youth member) that meets monthly. Officers generally meet weekly with clergy and the church's executive (administrative) director for an informal discussion to review pending issues and discuss next steps.

We schedule at least four Congregational Meetings each year, including our annual meeting for electing officers and approving a budget. While we have always held an annual Congregational Meeting for electing leaders and setting the budget, the addition of other quarterly Congregational Meetings is new with our governance structure changes beginning in 2023 - the goal is to have more regular check-ins with the congregation on strategic and operational direction for the church, so that members feel a deeper connection and empowerment to direct the church's mission work.

We have three standing committees charged with conducting research and providing advice in the areas of human resources, campus care, and finance and investment. We form task forces with focused, time-limited issues; a current example is our Building Renewal Task Force.

In 2023, we turned to a ministry team approach for key matters such as justice and community engagement and congregational care, with the goal of permitting more focus on service and requiring less time for committee meetings. This approach is off to a promising start, and we hope to match member interest and energy better with specific needs. It is hoped that this move away from traditional committee structures will help address a general decline in volunteerism by enabling members to offer their time in smaller or larger increments, with less bureaucratic overhead attached to their efforts. We are still in the early phases of implementing ministry teams, and we believe that effective ministerial encouragement will be key to ensuring the teams can be highly successful.

As a congregation, we can be drawn in multiple directions in addressing social justice issues, and struggle to achieve sustained focus. Currently, we are discerning how we can best respond to the tremendous need for affordable housing, while maintaining our long-standing commitment to food security issues.

Our Lead Minister spends from 2-10 hours weekly on matters related to the Governing Board, visioning work, development of lay leaders, setting goals and direction of the congregation with lay leaders and congregation, collaborating with Generosity Team/stewardship and fundraising. We anticipate that our Minister for Faith Formation and Pastoral Care will spend from 1-4 hours weekly attending Governing Board meetings and working with lay leaders on matters related to congregational connection and care and Christian Education.

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

When our Senior Minister resigned with short notice in July 2022 to take up a position with Church World Service, officers of the congregation and the chair of our human resources committee met with New Jersey Association staff to craft a plan for moving forward. The officers updated the congregation frequently via both email and Zoom. A special Governing Board meeting was soon scheduled to approve hiring a designated term minister for 18 months and appointing our Associate Minister to serve as Minister until the congregation could vote on calling a Lead Minister. This plan allowed the congregation to complete a strategic planning process and discern an appropriate clergy structure for the future.

Can you provide the next minister with a copy of an organization structure, bylaws and/or annual report to further explain the patterns of the church's activity and governance? [Yes/No] Yes.

3b. 11-YEAR REPORT

(add here the 11-Year Report developed with the help of your conference staff, UCC Data Hub, and MissionInsite)

Eleven Year Church report: Eleven Year Church Doc:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/8a2870b7001/4aa02b0f-08a9-4c27-acbb-9ebf83a55bcc.pdf>

ExecutiveInsite report: Union ExecutiveInsite:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/8a2870b7001/653cfc59-07af-436a-a686-0548a42f4e0d.pdf>

MinistryInsitePriorities report: Union MinistryInsitePriorities:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/8a2870b7001/421f47af-722e-4474-bd63-2fcc3be87b2e.pdf>

ReligiousInsite Priorities report: Union ReligiousInsitePriorities:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/8a2870b7001/cedefe11-44c6-48f2-8491-c89626873365.pdf>

3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	250	Y
Number of active non-members:	50	Y
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	300	Y

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	74%	Y
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	18%	Y
Less than 5 years:	8%	Y

Number of total participants by age:

0-11	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	<i>Are these numbers an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
20	20	17	11	29	32	65	73	76	Y

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	5	Y
Households with minors:	15	Y
Single adults age 35-65:	5	Y
Joint households with no minors:	40	Y
Single adults over 65:	35	Y

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	10	Y
College:	45	Y
Graduate School:	40	Y
Specialty Training:	5	Y
Other (please specify):		

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	45	Y
Adults who are retired:	45	Y
Adults who are not fully employed:	10	Y

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

People in our congregation work in the arts, education (higher education and K-12), finance, human resources, law, medicine, and more. Montclair has historically been a town where many people commute into Manhattan for work, which is reflected in our congregation.

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

While our congregation is predominantly white, of European descent, it also includes Asian American people, African American people, and people of multiple ethnicities. Our church is less diverse than the town we are in, and younger families are more likely to be inter-racial or BIPOC than older members. Some of our members are European immigrants.

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

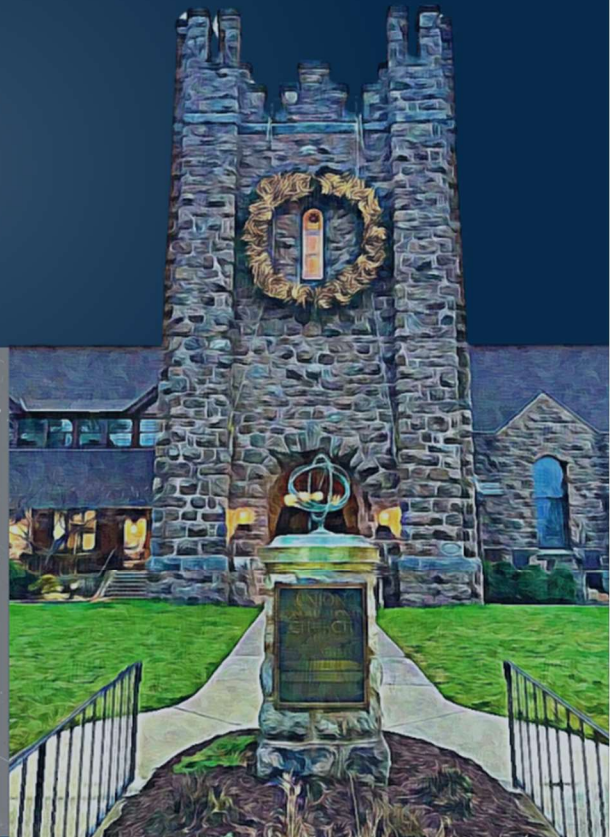
We have not specifically used the Welcoming Diversity Inventory. However, we are engaged in congregational work around racial justice (one of our missional priorities), including assessing our own diversity, welcome, and inclusion. We currently have a Racial Justice Ministry team and a staff learning circle that is working on identifying tools we can use to do

a comprehensive audit of our policies and practices. We see the Inventory as a great tool to engage, both in this search process and beyond it.

A "Blue" Christmas Service For The Weary Thursday, Dec. 21 At 7pm*

The Chapel At
Union Congregational Church
176 Cooper Avenue, Montclair

*livestreamed at
www.youtube.com/unioncong1



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? (list any and all worship planners, such as various lay leaders, pastors, musicians, other staff)
Adult Groups or Classes	<p>30+ Adult Groups</p> <p>Adult Group attendance is typically between 7 and 20.</p> <p>Adult Classes: We average two classes per month, and sometimes have a 4-week series. Likely 30 classes in 2023.</p> <p>Anywhere between 7 and 40 people in classes.</p>	<p>30+ Active Small Groups and Ministry Teams (some Ministry Teams are justice and community engagement-oriented adult groups)</p> <p>Mostly planned in collaboration with lay leaders and clergy, with some staff support.</p> <p>Our largest adult gatherings: Most of our adult classes are what we call “Second Hours” after Sunday worship. They can draw up to 40 people. We also have Heritage Hop dinners where we explore the food of a congregational member, and those can draw 40+ people.</p> <p>Our largest adult groups: We have 20 people who attend our Daytime Bible Study, and 20 people in our adult choir.</p>
Baptisms (<i>number last year</i>)	3	Clergy organizes

<p>Children’s Groups or Classes (We’ve included middle school and high school youth here)</p>	<p>Learning Centers every Sunday during worship</p> <p>3 Groups: Children’s Youth Group, Children’s Choir and Middle School/High School Youth Group</p> <p>At least 1 Children’s Youth Event and 1-2 Middle/High School Youth Events Per Month</p> <p>Children’s Youth Group: 9 children</p> <p>Children’s Choir: 8 members</p> <p>Middle/High School Youth: 9 youth</p> <p>*Note: Attendance can vary substantially for youth events, depending on sports and school activities, and level of interest in the event. Typical attendance may be 5-9, and can be as low as only 1 or 2.</p>	<p>2 Dedicated part-time staff and clergy.</p>
<p>Christmas Eve and Easter Worship</p>	<p>340 in attendance in person at Christmas Eve, two services 10 for Christmas Eve livestream 25 for Easter livestream 184 Easter</p>	<p>2 Clergy, some staff members, lay leaders</p>
<p>Church-wide Meals</p>	<p>10 Yearly - Congregational Meetings and All-church Events</p>	<p>Mostly members, some staff</p>

Choirs and Music Groups	<p>Adult Choir - 20 people</p> <p>Handbell Choir - 11 people</p> <p>Children's Choir - 8 members</p>	2 Part-Time Music Staff, 3 paid section leaders, some other staff and clergy
Church-based Bible Study	<p>Weekly Daytime Bible Study - 20 people</p> <p>Weekly Evening Bible Study - 8 people</p> <p>At Least 4 Book Reads - around 20 people</p> <p>2 Five Week Study Series Per Year - around 20 people</p>	A lot of input from clergy, and some from lay leaders
Communion (<i>served how often?</i>)	Communion is served the first Sunday of every month.	Clergy, three lay leaders
Community Meals	None; we volunteer at food insecurity non-profits and help once a year with a community meal with another church	
Confirmation (<i>number confirmed last year</i>)	We do confirmation classes every other year, partnering with one other church. Our half of the confirmation class in 2022 was 7 youths; there are 9 in 2024	Clergy
Drama or Dance Program	One drama program: the UCC Players. The Players engage 10-20 people in their presentations on average, plus the followers of the Players who attend the performances	The UCC Players have a rich 30+ year history with our church. They present theater productions, readings, and informal social gatherings. Mostly lay led, with some staff support

Funerals (<i>number last year</i>)	Four member funerals in 2023. Approximately 10 funerals for friends formerly associated with the church or the community	Clergy
Intergenerational Groups	<p>We don't have an intergenerational group as much as we have a fun, intergenerational event every quarter.</p> <p>We do have an older generation group that meets twice a month.</p>	Clergy, lay leaders and some staff support
Outdoor Worship	No regular outdoor worship but we do hold a sunrise service at a local park on Easter morning, and occasionally other services outdoors	Clergy
Prayer or Meditation Groups	No prayer groups. We very occasionally do meditation events. And we have a prayer shawl making group	Mostly lay led
Public Advocacy Work	We have a Justice and Community Engagement ministry that includes: New Jersey Together/Essex Together, Creation Justice as cooperation and community garden with Northeast Earth Coalition, a Racial Justice Ministry Team, work with Church World Service (related to the resettlement and support of newly-arriving refugees to the United States), Toni's Kitchen, Human Needs Food Pantry, CUMAC, Out Montclair (LGBTQ+), collaboration with Family	Clergy and lay leaders with some support from staff.

Public Advocacy Work continued...	<p>Promise on housing insecurity and other partnerships</p> <p>Likely 60 people involved in at least one of those groups</p> <p>Every year, the church chooses a non-profit to receive its member and church funded Christmas Offering and Easter Offering</p>	
Retreats	<p>One Women's Retreat and One Men's Retreat</p> <p>Average 30 women, 15 men at each retreat</p>	Clergy and lay led, with a small amount of support from staff
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community	None, though we have a "Reading Scripture with Pride" reparative LGBTQ+ event annually for the community	
Weddings (<i>number last year</i>)	6 in 2023	These weddings were not of congregants, but part of our "wedding ministry" that allows non-congregants to essentially rent the church for weddings, often bringing other clergy in to preside.
Worship (time slot: 10am Sunday)	76 (including an average of 50 during the summer), plus a weekly average of 18 via live streaming	
Worship (only one worship service except Christmas Eve)		
Young Adult Groups or Classes	None specifically for young adults, though our Pride Choir (LGBTQ+ non-religious community choir) has a good number of young adults (20+ young adults). The Pride Choir meets weekly and has 2-4 community concerts per year	Volunteer led, with a little bit of staff support

<p>Youth Groups or Classes</p>	<p>Outlined above in the children's section:</p> <p>One Middle School/High School Youth Group</p> <p>1-2 Middle/High School Youth Events Per Month</p> <p>Middle/High School Youth: 9 youth</p>	
<p>Other: Livestream</p>	<p>We have a very good camera/sound set up for our livestream/YouTube channel and a regular remote livestream community - people from within our state and people active with the church who have moved out of state. An average of 17 to 25 live streamers online together for our 10am Sunday service.</p> <p>We also livestream funerals upon request, and some concerts, and people really seem to love that they can have at-home accessibility to something they would not otherwise have exposure to.</p>	

Additional comments:

Our Instagram is @unioncongmtc

Our Facebook is www.facebook.com/unioncong

Our website is www.unioncong.org

Our YouTube channel is www.youtube.com/unioncong1

Our Pride Choir website is www.pridechoir.com and its Instagram is @pridechoir

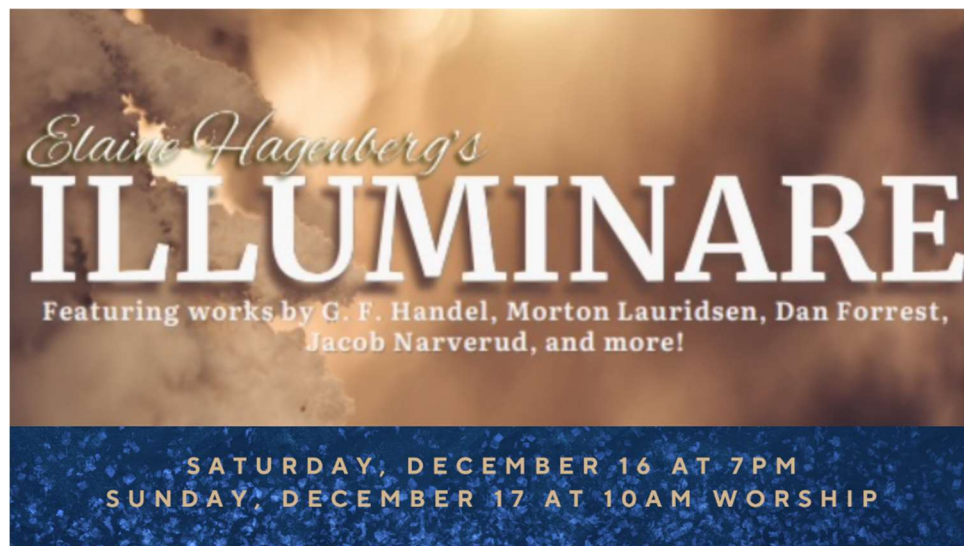
The congregation voted to make an Open and Affirming covenant to welcome LGBTQ+ people into the full life and ministry of the church in 2001. In 2023, our church was the host venue for our area's first-ever Trans Day of Visibility Celebration with a full day of transgender related panels and classes.

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

Name	Three- or Four-Way Covenant? <i>(3 or 4 or No)</i>	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired? <i>(Y or N)</i>
Rev. Martin Bailey	No			Y
Rev. Robert Chase	No			Y
Rev. Cindy Reynolds	No			Y
Rev. David Snyder	No	Chaplaincy/Pulpit Supply		N

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:

Rev. Bailey and Rev. Chase are active members of our congregation. Rev. Chase serves on task forces and committees. Rev. Reynolds moved recently to Connecticut after her retirement. Rev. Snyder is not in regular attendance with us.



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
Lead Minister	Yes	Full Time	Governing Board	<1 year in this position (5.5 years with the church)
Executive Director	Yes	Full Time	Governing Board	2.5 years
Member Engagement & Communications Manager		Full Time	Executive Director	2 years
Operations and Space Use Manager		Full Time	Executive Director	< 1 year
Director, Nursery School		Full Time	Executive Director	9 years
Co-Music Directors		Part Time	Lead Minister	1.5 years
Coordinator for Children and Youth		Part Time	Lead Minister	1.5 years

REFLECTION

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

Even though our population of active members has decreased in the 11-year report, our list of activities demonstrates that we are a vibrant, energetic community, focused on a variety of missions-related activities. We also have a number of relatively new staff and are implementing a new governance structure intended to utilize our members’ energy in meaningful ways, more focused on mission than on bureaucracy. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for the person who steps into the new ministerial role.

3e. CHURCH FINANCES

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

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$461,573
Endowment Proceeds (<i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i>)	\$366,016
Endowment Draw (<i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, "drawing down the principal"</i>)	\$60,762
Fundraising Events	\$0
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$32,001
Grants	\$7,935
Rentals of Church Building	\$26,028
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$0
Support from Related Organizations (<i>e.g. Women's Group</i>)	\$0
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$0
Other (specify): Trust income	\$112,437
Other (specify): Misc income	\$8,690
TOTAL	\$1,075,442

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year): \$1,075,442

Attach most recent church budget, spending plan, operating statement, or annual treasurer's report as shared publicly with the congregation:

2022 Treasurer Report: <https://files.constantcontact.com/8a2870b7001/3ae1cd53-e7a7-41ca-9a5c-f9a657ae1dea.pdf>

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

23.8% projected for the 2024-25 fiscal year

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

No

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

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

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered? If calculated as a percentage of operating budget, what is that percentage? (recommended 10%)

OCWM Basic Support is included in our operating budget. It is currently 8%.

- $OCWM = \text{Pledges} + \text{Non-pledge Contributions} + \text{Plate} * 8\% - \text{NJ Association dues}$

We draw on our budget allocation for Justice and Community Engagement to make \$1,500 contributions to the quarterly United Church of Christ offerings (for a total of \$6,000).

What is the church's current indebtedness?

Our church is not currently indebted.

Total amount of loan debt: N/A

Reason for debt: N/A

Are capital and other payments current? N/A

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

We have formed a Building Renewal Task Force to guide our review for how we may consolidate church offices and staff in our main building, while improving accessibility and flexibility in our worship and program spaces. We engaged Pfaff Architects of Nyack, NY in May 2023 to undertake a feasibility study, which they presented to the Governing Board in December 2023 and to the congregation in February 2024. The Building Renewal Task Force is currently reviewing the study and will make recommendations for phasing in and financing renovations. It is likely that we will launch a capital campaign to undertake necessary renovations.

At the same time, we are evaluating how best to use our school and administrative building (known as the Vincent Building) that currently houses staff offices and a Nursery School. One possibility is working with a developer to convert the building into senior affordable housing, though to be clear, this option has not yet been fully explored or presented to the congregation for approval. We are fortunate that a church member who is one of the leading

architects in town is co-chairing the Building Renewal Task Force and leading the review of uses for the Vincent Building.

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

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
2010-2014	Exterior restoration and repairs to main buildings	\$1,725,000	\$2,812,000	See explanation below

The theme of our Capital Campaign was, "If these stones could speak, the stories they could tell," tied to exterior restoration and repairs for our main buildings. With the challenge of raising \$1.725 million to finance Phase One of the building restoration, a team was formed consisting of 13 leaders and an additional 77 members. With the assistance of our consultant, Bea Stoner, the team leaders worked to develop a plan, train personnel, and create communication tools. Goals were achieved with the congregation pledging \$1,864,000, the Nursery School pledging \$198,000, and the New Jersey Trust granting \$750,000, totaling \$2.812 million. This extraordinary result allowed for the restoration project to proceed without a Phase Two campaign.

The work was completed in three phases over a three-year period, 2011-2014. All costs were funded from the Capital Campaign and NJ Trust Grant.

Phase 1 addressed the lintels, mortar, flashing and large roof issues on the Vincent Building (office/education building) and 65 percent of the main building's bedding mortar, final pointing, flashing and flat roofs.

Phase 2 addressed the rest of the main building's bedding mortar, final pointing and flashing.

Phase 3 addressed stained-glass window restoration and redesign of the Memorial Garden; total kitchen renovation and installation of central air conditioning in Parsonage One; restoration of the East Wing windows and landscaping of the Tower and East Wing.

If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe:

No capital campaign is underway at this time, though one is anticipated if we decide that modifications should be made to the current main building.

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

While there was no mission component tied to the 2010-2013 campaign, the funds raised allowed for the restoration of the buildings, which are used by several community-based organizations.

Does your church have an endowment?

Yes

What is the market value of the assets?

\$5.9 million (as of 12/31/2023)

- This amount does not include a \$2.2 million Trust for which the church is the sole beneficiary.

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

As part of the budget process and with member approval each year, 5% of church reserve funds are generally drawn to cover annual expenses with additional amounts used to cover shortfalls or special capital projects.

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

In 2022, there was a 9% draw from the church’s Foundation and Kuhn’s reserve funds, two key funds provided by member legacy contributions over the years. In 2017, there was a 4.2% draw.

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

For the current July 2023- June 2024 budget year, we are projecting an 8% draw from our Foundation and Kuhn’s reserve funds to meet operating expenses. For the previous five fiscal years, the draws have been as follows:

- 2022: 9%
- 2021: 7.7%
- 2020: 4.7%
- 2019: 5.3%
- 2018: 4.5%

The 6-year (2017-2022) average withdrawal rate is 6.41%, while the 10-year average withdrawal rate is 7%.

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

While this determination would be heavily influenced by market conditions, additional gifts to the reserve funds, and size of future budgets approved by the congregation, we would anticipate the endowment lasting at minimum 25 to 30 years.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

Union Congregational Church is in a good financial position based upon its strong asset base, including reserve funds, trust, and land and buildings. Union is also comprised of a dedicated group of members committed to its impactful and sustainable future. The congregation is

taking intentional steps to ensure that it remains a strong presence in our community for years to come.

Other Assets

Reserves (savings): \$5.9 Million

Investments (other than endowment): \$2.2 million (trust)

Does your church have a parsonage?

Yes, the church owns two parsonages.

Lead Minister residence (Parsonage Two):

Address: 169 Cooper Avenue, Montclair, NJ 07043

Rooms: 8

Bedrooms: 5

Bathrooms: 4

Description: The Lead Minister parsonage is a three-story, Colonial-style home with a front wrap-around porch. It was built about 1900 and is located directly across the street from the church complex. It has a two-car detached garage.

Distance from Church: across the street

Handicapped Accessible? No

Minister for Pastoral Care & Faith Formation residence (Parsonage One):

Address: 160 Cooper Avenue, Montclair, NJ 07043

Rooms: 12

Bedrooms: 6

Bathrooms: 3.5

Description: The parsonage for the Minister for Pastoral Care and Faith Formation is a three-story, Tudor-style home built in 1905 on the grounds of the church complex. It has a two-car detached garage.

Distance from Church: Immediately next door.

Handicapped Accessible? Partial

How is the parsonage used? Residence

Available for minister residence: Y/N

Expected minister residence: Y/N

Condition of structure, systems and appliances:

Total kitchen renovation and installation of central air conditioning in 2014. Some electrical wiring was replaced in 2022.

Entity in the church responsible for review and needed repairs:

Executive Director/Operations Manager

Describe all buildings owned by the church:

Our 3-acre church campus includes 4 buildings. The main church building, which includes the sanctuary and Assembly Room, is approximately 23,500 square feet. The Vincent Building houses the church offices, Nursery School, and Chapel and is approximately 17,500 square feet. There are also 2 parsonages for clergy housing.



The Church Building

The present structure is the result of two major building campaigns in 1899 and 1911. Construction of the church began in 1899 on land donated by the Cooper family. The church was originally designed by the prominent turn-of-the-century architectural firm of Cady, Berg & See, and was inspired by Henry Fenn’s sketch of a chapel in Surrey, England. The design was published in 1899 by the Architectural League of New York and stands today as one of Montclair’s many outstanding houses of worship.

In 1911, an east wing addition was constructed and modifications to the existing building were carried out. This work was designed by another outstanding firm, Price and McLanahan, Architects from Philadelphia. It generally carried and continued the architectural expression of the earlier work. In 1975, the church building suffered a damaging fire that destroyed a major part of the roof. As a result, the building was restored and altered in 1976.

In 1981, the Memorial Garden was established in an area on the front grounds of the church. The church was listed on the State Register of Historic Places on September 29, 1986, and on the National Register of Historic Places on July 1, 1988. Today, the church houses the sanctuary, Assembly Hall and meeting rooms.

Vincent Building



The Vincent Building was constructed around 1956 to the west of the main building. It was designed by the architectural firm of Bell & Warren from New York. The building was modified in 1964 when an addition was constructed to house the Memorial Chapel. This addition was designed by Derick B. Kipp, an architect from Montclair. The Vincent Building serves as a school and administrative building. We are currently evaluating its best missional use going forward, including the possibility of converting it to senior affordable housing.

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

N/A

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

The sanctuary and chapel worship spaces are accessible to wheelchairs, but unfortunately not the pulpit and chancel areas in the main church building. The main level of the Vincent building and the Assembly Room in the main church building are also accessible to wheelchairs.

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

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

Building upon its rich and long history, Union Congregational Church is a vibrant and energetic congregation committed to utilizing its resources to strengthen its ministries, advocate for social justice, and continue to have a strong impact on its local community and beyond for years to come.

The Governing Board approved new financial health principles in May 2023 to help guide Union Congregational Church on a more sustainable fiscal path while also allowing it to invest in its future. The principles provide guidance in terms of the draw from reserve funds, presenting the budget in terms of the church's ministry areas (Worship and Music, Christian Education, Congregational Connection and Care, Justice and Community Engagement),

spending on staffing and outreach, and more. The current and future budgets will be drafted based on these principles and accompanying vision.

The annual budget is developed by the Treasurer and Executive Director with input from the Lead Minister and Financial Policy & Investment Standing Committee. The annual budget is presented to the Governing Board for review and approval. After board approval, the budget is presented to the congregation by the Treasurer and Executive Director for their approval.

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.

Our church will celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2031. We were the first church formed in Upper Montclair, and from the beginning we have been community-based, ecumenical, and progressive. A booklet describing our origin story is available at <https://www.blurb.com/books/9764349-neighbors-and-union>

Our congregation faced one of its greatest challenges in 1975 when our Main Building, including our sanctuary, burned. We emerged stronger as a congregation as we rebuilt. A recent presentation about the fire and its aftermath is available at: <https://youtu.be/iKdvok5LCg4?feature=shared>

The COVID pandemic posed significant challenges to our congregation, disrupting traditional in-person worship and social justice outreach. Fortunately, the congregation had already invested in an improved communications structure, which enabled us to continue weekly worship via Zoom. Recognizing that pandemics can cause fundamental change, we also used this period to engage in a thorough strategic visioning process.

The resignation on short notice of our Senior Minister in July 2022 to join Church World Service posed fresh challenges. We benefited from the leadership of highly committed laypersons and ministers within the congregation, the dedication of our church staff, and not least spiritual guidance from our Associate Minister Katrina Forman who was asked to step into the role of Minister. On January 21, 2024, the congregation called Katrina Forman to be our Lead Minister. Joy all around!

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

One of the key results of Union's 2021-2022 Strategic Visioning Process was a commitment to adopt a more nimble and sustainable congregational governance model that allows members

to devote their energy to mission and spiritual growth. As is typically the case at Union, a Task Force was appointed to create a proposal for a new governance structure and, if approved, to shepherd the process of a major rewrite to our governing document, The Constitution and Bylaws. The proposal was approved by the congregation in February 2023, and the revised governing documents approved by the congregation in June 2023, effective July 1. We are now more than halfway through the first year of implementation and experience with the new structure. Both the proposal and Constitution were approved with near unanimity.

At the outset, congregational support for the commitments resulting from the Strategic Visioning Process was cautious and conditional, reflecting a willingness to go forward, while reserving the right to decide at a later date, based on more specific recommendations. The widespread willingness and even enthusiasm to embrace significant changes a year later to something held dear - our congregational structure - is certainly an example of the Spirit working through us. From a process perspective, there are a few lessons to be learned from this recent experience, all of which focus on communication and transparency:

- Frequent and varied communications with and feedback channels from the congregation are key. We enabled multiple opportunities to provide feedback across a variety of media - in-person, on Zoom, and in writing. And we used all communications tools at staff's and the Task Force's disposal, including recorded versions of presentations, email, website, live presentations, recordings, white papers etc. These techniques enabled us to accommodate different schedules and communications preferences, and to realize the benefits of repetition and reinforcement.
- By conducting (and communicating) research into best practices and experiences at other churches we were able to build the congregation's confidence and trust in the process and recommendations.
- The Task Force willingly shared preliminary thinking, even if controversial, with the congregation, and endeavored to incorporate feedback where appropriate, rather than simply presenting an airtight proposal.
- The Task Force was comprised of active members and good listeners in relationship with, and engaged with, many different segments of the congregation.
- The congregation demonstrated growth and courage in its willingness to try new approaches and to experiment.

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

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

Over the last 6 or 7 years, our congregation has engaged in consideration of whether and how to create a more flexible worship space. Early on, the Worship Committee visited neighboring churches and explored different seating options, including the possibility of removing pews. There was disagreement among members over this idea, with some believing the pews are both more comfortable and an important expression of our traditions, while others felt removing them would be better for accessibility and allow for a greater variety of configurations in the sanctuary. Because the idea was sensitive and controversial, direct discussion of the issue was set aside for a couple of years. Two years ago a new Task Force revisited the issue, and we engaged architects to prepare a feasibility study for reconfiguring our chancel area and providing flexible seating. The congregation will consider various options during 2024, likely through small group meetings and other methods. Although we don’t know what the outcome will be, we believe the conversation can be more productive with some concrete ideas put forward about how different seating options could look and be configured for different uses. We have learned the importance of engaging the congregation in the process and considering different options as opposed to forcing an up-or-down vote on a recommendation. We understand the importance of disagreeing amicably and that reaching a consensus can be a lengthy process. We accept what can feel like a slow process, because we recognize that building and sustaining community is an increasingly important exercise to model in our often polarized and divided society.

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

Staff member’s name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Katrina Forman Associate Minister 2018 - 2024 Lead Minister 2024 -	5	Yes/Current
Ron Verblauw Designated Term Minister 2022 - 2024	2	Yes/Current
David Shaw Senior Minister 2015 - 2022	7	No
Lindsey Turner Associate Minister 2016 - 2018	2	No

Tom Zoelzer Interim Minister 2013 - 2015	2	Retired
Barbara Callaghan Assistant Minister 2013 - 2015	2	Yes/Hancock UCC
Stephanie Weiner Senior Minister 1993 - 2012	19	Retired
Frank Newsome 2010 - 2013 Minister for Christian Formation and Youth	3	Retired
Leah Fowler Associate Minister 2005 - 2009	3	Yes/Leonia Presbyterian Church
Mark Boyea Associate Minister 2002 - 2004	3	Yes/Sanibel Congregational Church
Mark Montgomery Associate Minister 2000 - 2001	1	Yes/Wilton Presbyterian Church
William Worley Associate Minister 1994 - 2000	6	Yes/Conference Minister, Pennsylvania Southeast Conference
Betty Bailey Associate Minister 1986 - 1993	16	Deceased
Yorke Peeler Senior Minister 1979 - 1992	13	Retired

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

- We have adjusted our expectations about how much we expect from our clergy.
- We have revised our governance structure to clarify authority and accountability for ministers and lay volunteers.
- We are actively exploring how to better engage the congregation in key issues.
- We have worked to better define and respect boundary issues, enabling ministers at Union to tend to family matters and other life issues.

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

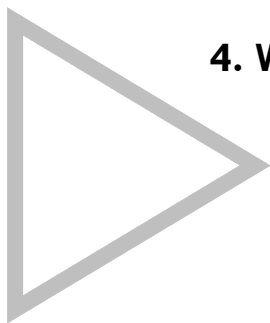
No past ministers have been involuntarily terminated. There have been two instances of ministers resigning after discussions with leadership about the direction of ministry.

Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?

No

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

No



4. WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

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

- a. COMMUNITY VISION
- b. MISSION InSite

4a. COMMUNITY VISION

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

For example, which service activities has your church participated in this past year?

Where has the church participated in global connections of care and justice? What is currently transformational in your church’s engagement with neighbors near or far?

Following the pandemic and our governance changes, we have less regular volunteer activities than we once did. However, there is still significant energy to do so, and we are actively working on figuring out which activities are sustainable, and which are no longer a good fit. We have regular ways we seek to support food security agencies in our community, such as preparing meals for Christine’s Kitchen, which is organized by a church member 1-2 times a year. We also have done targeted winter clothing drives for the Human Needs Food Pantry. A small group of members has volunteered at CUMAC, a food pantry in nearby Paterson, NJ - an organization we have a long history of supporting. Our youth group currently serves once a month at Toni’s Kitchen.

We are also proud to be founding members of Essex Together, our county’s chapter of NJ Together, an Industrial Areas Foundation advocacy group. Together with the other congregations and organizations that make up the group, we are actively finding ways to advocate for criminal justice reform, education, green energy, housing and more. We are still grappling with a congregational read from more than 5 years ago - *Toxic Charity* - and figuring out how to balance service and advocacy!

We also have a passion for creation justice. Over the last few years, we worked with the UCC to host a climate justice intern from our own congregation. We partnered with a local community garden to start a garden on our campus, the produce from which is donated to Toni’s Kitchen for the food insecure. We are talking with a nearby UCC church and reconstructionist temple about how we can partner more in our climate justice work.

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

We are relatively active in the wider church. We have a member serving on the Association's Church and Ministry Committee, our Lead Minister serves on the Pre-Ordination Commission. We have often had members serve on the Conference Board, and usually have at least a few people attend General Synod, and are faithful attenders of meetings of the Association and Conference, although in lower numbers than in the past.

It is helpful to know that when the UCC's national offices were in NYC, many of their staff were members of our congregation, so we have some deep ties to the wider church. At the same time, fewer of our newer members have as deep a connection to the denomination.

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

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

Reflect on what the above statement(s) mean(s) to your community. Is your congregation interested in working toward any of the above statements of witness in the near future?
We have had some conversations about becoming a Creation Justice Church, and in exploring the A2A designation, especially as we think about major changes to our campus.

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

We really value our interfaith work. Our clergy have consistently been active in the Montclair Interfaith Clergy Association. We enjoy deepening our relationships and doing programming with the amazing synagogues in our community, and with Peace Islands Institute, a regional Turkish Muslim organization.

As mentioned previously, we have been part of the creation of an ecumenical youth group, as well.

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.

In addition to our broad Statement of Purpose, we also set missional priorities for each year. The Statement of Purpose incorporates our worship, bible study, adult and youth Christian Education, work of our various ministry teams, and community outreach activities. As such, we believe a very high proportion of our activity is directly mission-related. Nevertheless, there is always some work in running a church that is less directly related to mission (though we believe it is all supportive of mission), such as committee and governance meetings, building maintenance, and financial planning and management. As we continue to implement and adjust our new Governance structure, we expect that an even higher proportion of our member and staff efforts will be mission-centered.

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?

Union pastors are encouraged to participate and/or take leadership roles in community activities and organizations related to our mission. For example, our ministers are involved in the work of the New Jersey Association, and have taken leadership roles in New Jersey Together, Montclair Clergy Association, and other community activities. Each year, ministers undergo a performance review and visioning of their goals for the upcoming year, and the goals include community and wider church activities related to our Statement of Purpose.

4b. MISSION InSite

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

We note that the report is focused on our zip code. While historically a good portion of our members came from our zip code, which covers only a portion of our town, and is still well-represented, many of our members live in surrounding areas, and we expect the trends would look different in a wider area. That said, a few things of note:

- The top two reasons people in faith communities consider leaving is because of lack of programs for children/youth and lack of support during a time of need. Our intention in focusing this new position on pastoral care and developing stronger programs for children and families is to prioritize those areas and shore up these perceived weaknesses of many churches.

- Our worship services are intended to attract people searching for a warm and friendly welcome, quality sermons, and traditional worship experiences.
- Although social justice work is cited at the bottom of the list of priorities in this zip code in the Mission Insite report, our surveys indicate that members see it as a high priority of the congregation.

Individuals not participating in a faith community reported the following top reasons:

- Religion too focused on money
- Disillusionment with religion
- Don't trust organized religion
- Religious People too Judgmental
- Don't trust religious leaders

These reasons were reported as more significant barriers to participation than any regarding individual personal faith beliefs.

Union's vision for community engagement is to create opportunities that lower the barriers of distrust and disillusionment with mainline Christianity and help individuals connect with God and the community.

One of the key initiatives in our strategic visioning process that began 3 years ago, was to create new community engagement opportunities. For example, we participate in annual PrideFest activities, host a community-wide Pride Choir, contributed to a county-wide effort to extinguish medical debt, and participate in NJ/Essex Together work on criminal justice reform. We continue to try new approaches to becoming a more welcoming community, particularly as we consider updates to the physical campus.

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?

On the whole, Union's membership reflects the demographics of our largely white immediate neighborhood, though we skew older. Even so, our service area is broader than our immediate neighborhood - many of our newer members come from communities outside Montclair - and we aspire to be welcoming to a more ethnically diverse community.

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

Montclair has an affordable housing shortage, especially for retired persons, and we are engaging in active thought and research about how/whether our campus might be used differently to help in this area.

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

This year we have had two community partners tell us that we “practice what we preach” - for our Pride Choir and our support of the Montclair Fund for Educational Excellence’s programs to support newcomer students from immigrant families in our school district. It certainly makes us proud to hear that! Our Nursery School also has a great reputation in town.

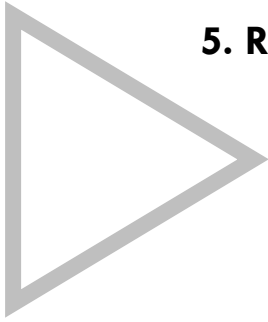
What do new people in the church say when asked what got them involved?

Some new people report that they came to our church from churches that are not welcoming and affirming for LGBTQ+ people. Most of those folks are not LGBTQ+ themselves wish to be in a Christian faith community that welcomes everyone into the full life and ministry of the church.

Others report that they were attracted to the church as a result of the church’s active social mission. They feel that Union Congregational Church doesn’t just talk about Christian service in the abstract but actively serves in its local area, providing individuals opportunities to make tangible, positive impacts in the community.

Finally, others find UCC while looking for a place of community, for a group to support them if they have been through a loss or difficult time, and/or spiritual connection.





5. REFERENCES

Name up to three people who have agreed to serve as phone and written references. Advise the three references: “The contact information you provide may be shared publicly. Please use contact information that you feel comfortable giving to candidates so they can reach you with their questions.” Make sure they are not members of your church but are persons who know your church well enough to be helpful to candidates seeking more information. Request a letter from each reference in answer to the four prompts below. Attach the letters (up to three) as desired.

REFERENCE 1

Masiel Rodriguez/Executive Director/Montclair Fund for Educational Excellence (MFEE)
(Telephone: 877-442-MFEE, Ext. 1; Email: masiel@mfee.org; Community partner)

Reference Letter: <https://files.constantcontact.com/8a2870b7001/770c5ac6-8df1-4a84-95c9-d5352de12b20.pdf>

REFERENCE 2

Marc Katz/Rabbi/Temple Ner Tamid

(Telephone: 973-338-1500; Email: Rabbi@nertamid.org; Interfaith partner)

Reference Letter: <https://files.constantcontact.com/8a2870b7001/b788b1ec-f504-4f2e-9da7-3c2b604c90a4.pdf>

REFERENCE 3

Ann Ralosky/Lead Pastor/First Congregational Church (FCC), Montclair

(Telephone: 973-744-4856; Email: revann@fccmtc.com; Ann was a member of Union before becoming a minister and taking on her present role as co-pastor of FCC, another UCC church also in Montclair)

Reference Letter: <https://files.constantcontact.com/8a2870b7001/67979e79-d9ae-43e8-8884-d51ee8009cdd.pdf>

PROMPTS FOR REFERENCES

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

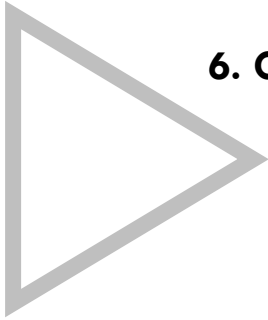
Describe some areas for improvement in this church's ministry.

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

Anything else you wish to share.

PLEASE NOTE: All documents hosted in this profile can also be found at:

<https://conta.cc/3VsINUo>



6. CLOSING THOUGHTS

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

6a. CLOSING PRAYER

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

Micah 6:8

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

⁸He has told you, O mortal, what is good,
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice and to love kindness
and to walk humbly with your God?

“Our task is the opposite of distraction. Our task is to help people concentrate on the real but often hidden event of God’s active presence in their lives. Hence, the question that must guide all organizing activity in a parish is not how to keep people busy, but how to keep them from being so busy that they can no longer hear the voice of God who speaks in silence.” - Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart: the Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers*

Link to video of Plowshare Prayer song: <https://youtu.be/t1XShS8BdrY?si=ZQPnjyEjHpPF5eat>

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

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

- Governing Board
- Search Committee
- Lead Minister
- Staff

2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

None

Signed:



Michael Spinella/Co-chair Search Committee/March 20, 2024

6c. VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

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

Staff Comment: The congregation is the most generous OCWM giver in the New Jersey Association. They have also regularly provided both lay and clergy representatives to the New Jersey Association's commission and council. They are a church that lives out its commitment to covenant.


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

Staff Comment: Yes

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

Staff Comment: Yes

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature: 

Name / Title: Rev. Craig Peterson, Association Conference Minister for Congregational Development

Email: cpeterson@cacucc.org

Phone: 947-888-8349

Date: March 20, 2024

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