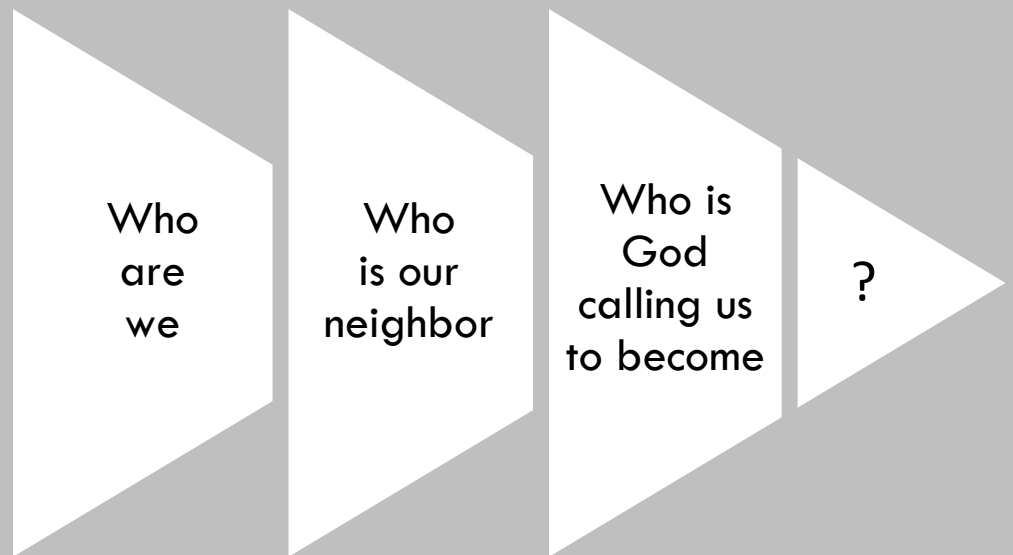


Search and Call Tools for Congregations

Advancing the Spirit's guidance into God's future

INTRODUCING THE NEW LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE



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

MINISTERIAL EXCELLENCE,
SUPPORT & AUTHORIZATION

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ
Cleveland, Ohio

Pastor

Heartland Conference. Living Water Association

May 30, 2023

*“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

Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ
2592 West 14th Street, Cleveland OH 44113
www.pilgrimalive.org

Heartland Conference. Living Water Association

Rev. Nayiri Karjian, General Minister. Nayiri.agm@livingwaterone.org 203.722.9174

Summary Ministry Description:

Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ is a faith community with deep roots in hospitality, social justice, and solidarity with LGBTQ+ people. We are seeking a pastor to lead worship, nurture formation, and build community within and outside our walls. As we move from a medium to smaller size congregation, we have committed to investing in our large historic building and finding a partner/s to help us fully utilize it. We seek a pastor who will walk with us and help us move forward with joy into a future expressing God's love in the world.





What we value about living in our area:

Greater Cleveland is an affordable place to live especially given all the amenities we enjoy. World class cultural and art institutions and districts, a Best in Nation Award winning park system, diverse population, and a wide variety of neighborhoods and living styles to choose from. Outdoor areas, including Lake Erie, are easy to reach, for biking, hiking, and boating. The countryside and its pleasures are a short ride away.

The immediate neighborhoods around the church – Tremont, Ohio City, and the inner ring suburb of Lakewood – are vibrant, diverse urban neighborhoods. They are walkable places with shops and restaurants, and the parks are focal points for community life and events.

Current size of membership: **146**

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

Position Title: **Pastor**

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 Pilgrim and moves standing to the Living Water Association.

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

Full Time

Will consider part time / bi-vocational

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines? **Yes**

1b. SCOPE OF WORK

Our Pastor will:

- **Prepare and lead Sunday worship. Collaborate with a musician to develop and nurture a creative musical program and share leadership with a lay liturgist. We desire creative worship with a message to carry forward during the week. (We have hired a new musician who is ready to make full use of our instruments and help us develop an exciting music program.)**
- **Offer pastoral care with the support of the Called to Care Ministry Team.**
- **Nurture formation so that our actions are grounded in our faith. Lead gatherings to develop and deepen understanding of the Christian imperative to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves, and that build community among us.**
- **Network with other churches and organizations that share our values. Identify relationships to multiply our witness and strengths for justice making.**
- **Engage the local community as an ambassador of God's love and represent Pilgrim in visible witness and support.**
- **Help us connect with potential partners to share our building. Expand our networks and think creatively about how we can maximize its use.**
- **Serve as head of staff.**
- **Participate in United Church of Christ events and activities.**

Core Competencies:

We seek a Pastor who is:

- **Spiritually mature, deeply connected with their faith, and who can convey the joy of discipleship. One who can nurture fresh approaches to worship and study.**
- **Entrepreneurial, and is mentally agile and adaptable. One who can think strategically.**
- **A relationship builder. We are a church who cares for our members. We also want to attract new members and reach out to the community. We want to renew our connections across the city ecumenically and civically.**

1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

Salary Basis: **Conference Guidelines. Competitive.**

Benefits: **Salary plus Benefits**

What is the expected living situation for your next minister: **Housing Allowance**

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

The immediate neighborhoods around the church, Tremont, Ohio City, and the inner ring suburb of Lakewood are vibrant, diverse urban neighborhoods. There is a wide range of housing options from rental apartments (in houses and new amenity-heavy buildings) to houses built last year and a century ago. Many are within walking or biking distance of the church. Suburbs are an easy drive as four freeways intersect in Tremont and make the whole region accessible.

State any incentives: **N/A**

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

Several UCC churches have begun working together more closely. There is a history of ecumenical neighborhood collaboration, though the relationships need to be nurtured. City-wide ecumenical and interfaith networks exist, and Association communities of practice and relationships are abundant.

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

We affirm work – life balance while acknowledging the difficulty of achieving it. We have recent experience with a Pastor who served $\frac{3}{4}$ time.

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 Interim Pastor led us in four formal conversations to discern the heart of our ministry and mission as we seek a new Pastor. Our goals are:

- **Extending extravagant hospitality by being with and welcoming to all.**
- **Helping and being with those in need outside our church membership.**
- **Extending hospitality and support to persons and families of any sexual orientation or gender identity.**
- **Pilgrim made the decision (not for the first time in our church's life) to remain in our historic building in Tremont. We are committed to witness and service here and are seeking a partner to share space and costs so our building can be used to its full potential.**

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

Pilgrim reaffirmed the Vision Statement we adopted in January 2022. In faith, we embrace a vision of a just, peaceful, sustainable, and loving world for all.

We envision a Pastor who will actively pursue social justice initiatives, and where applicable, equip and organize the congregation to engage in ministries and actions that support our vision. We seek a leader who can help us establish creative partnerships for the full and financially sustainable use of our building.

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

Pilgrim functions almost exclusively in English. Some Spanish is spoken in the Food Pantry. We use language that is contemporary and inclusive for God and the people. We value any cross-cultural competencies that would help extend our ability to serve.

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.

Pilgrim members individually ranked and then in small groups discussed and ranked The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministry for Pilgrim to move forward with our new Pastor. (Two asterisks ** indicate the top preference in category. Those marked with one asterisk * equal frequent first choices.)

Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice

- Loving God, following Jesus Christ, and being guided by the Holy Spirit; living a life of discipleship. **
- Praying actively and nurturing spiritual practices. *
- Exhibiting a commitment to lifelong spiritual development and faithful personal stewardship. *
- Being called to ordained ministry by God and the Church. *

Working Together for Justice and Mercy

- Drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression **
- Building relationships of mutual trust and interdependence. *
- Identifying and working to overcome explicit and implicit bias in the life of the Church. *
- Engaging in mission and outreach. *

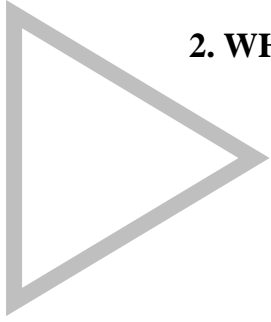
Caring For All Creation

- Providing hope and healing to a hurting world. *
- Practicing self-care and life balance. *
- Nurturing care and compassion for God's creation. *
- Maintaining a basic understanding of mental health and wellness. *

Building Transformational Leadership Skills

- Empowering the Church to be faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission, and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit. **
- Working collaboratively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity. *
- Strategically creating the future of God's Church. *
- Performing necessary and appropriate administrative tasks. *

The church profile writing committee acknowledges that the choices named in 1.b. Scope of Work, and 1D. Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers and the role of the Pastor outlined in the Pilgrim Constitution (Spiritual Leader and Chief Administrator) may not reflect a seamless garment.



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? (Mission)

Pilgrim reaffirmed the Mission Statement we adopted in January 2022.

United in Spirit and inspired by Christ, our mission is to create a loving and inclusive community through worship and acts of social justice, service, peacemaking, and inspiration.

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

Pilgrim has a long history as the church of the open door, the open heart, and the open mind. Hospitality and justice-making are deeply rooted. They are in our DNA and people sense it in our walls. Built as an institutional church, we offer a place for myriad activities. We invested heavily to make our historic building accessible, installing an elevator from ground to balcony level, and we provide hearing assistance devices.

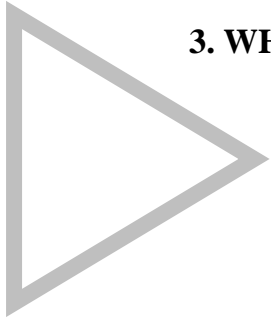
We recognize the changed environment for our church, physically and virtually. We seek new ways to connect and live out Jesus’ message to love God, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Our solidarity with LGBTQ+ people is long. It challenges and calls us to renewed commitment and action in the face accelerated threats. We are currently exploring relationship with an organization that seeks to claim the space where faith, gender and human sexuality intersect. We want to support transgender people and provide the spiritual space where they and their families may find refuge, nurture, and affirmation in the Christian context.

We maintain an active neighborhood Food Pantry and engage in various forms of social justice education and advocacy.

We voted to be a Sanctuary Church in 2018. We partnered with local organizations to support people in danger of deportation. Our role was to house a father of two children, taking care of meals and groceries, laundry, transporting kids to activities and helping maintain family unity. We joined weekly demonstrations at the Immigration and Naturalization Service’s facility. This is a partnership waiting to be renewed.

Our building has much beauty and capacity, and excellent acoustics. The auditorium design in the sanctuary makes it highly desirable for musical performances of all kinds. We are in the process of upgrading and integrating our media systems to make an already attractive space appealing for in person and online experiences. The surrounding spaces could house supporting services required by an arts organization.



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.

We claim all persons in the Trinity. Our Creator God is frequently invoked in prayer and worship services. We attest to being Christ centered in our thoughts and actions and go forward following his example. We count on the Spirit to invigorate our thoughts and inspire our actions.

We formally voted to be a Just Peace Church in the early 1990s. As allies and members of the LGBTQ+ community, we were among the first Open and Affirming Churches in Ohio, having completed the intentional process in 1993. We voted to be a Sanctuary church in 2018.

God is most often described in worship as God, Holy One, Eternal One, Most High, Still Speaking, Father and Mother, Spirit, Triune, Sovereign. Gender inclusive language for God and the people has been used for many years.

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

We often hear that Pilgrim is valued as a place where one is not going to be judged. People who perceive themselves as offbeat feel like they belong. Especially for people who have experienced damage in church, our congregation really does welcome all kinds.

We have long practiced the art of hospitality and are known for it. We have revived our systems and habits of welcome since the COVID 19 pandemic disruptions and are adapting them to lingering hesitation to practices like handshaking. We have yet to perfect ways to reinforce our welcome to new people who find us via online worship.

Our experience of COVID 19 brought home how much we value the person to person contact that worshipping and eating together provide. For many of us, Pilgrim is chosen family, and when we are together, we find joy and belonging.

Our Called to Care Team is a trained, dedicated group that expands the nurture and support Pilgrim can offer. From congratulatory cards to accompanying one in their final days, we can enhance the Pastor's presence.

Pilgrim people genuinely like one another, and cherish that through church, we are in relationship with people we would not come across in other parts of our lives.

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

Greeting participants starts at the door, and most of us wear nametags. Worship generally takes place in our sanctuary, a gorgeous, auditorium style Victorian room. There are stained glass windows, hand painted wall coverings, original furnishings, and a glass dome that lend a warm, sacred feeling to the space. We also use our chapel, our Fellowship Hall, and our street front garden for occasional services.

The leader and liturgist use a pulpit on the raised chancel level. Our central pulpit demonstrates the importance of the Word in our services. Our Communion table is on the main floor, accessible to all. We celebrate Communion once a month.

We follow the Lectionary and value coordinated musical selections to complement the message. We have a pipe organ on the main floor and use a grand piano as well. There is plenty of room for other musicians and singers to enhance service music. There are New Century Hymnals in each pew. We offer large format paper bulletins.

While our space is grand and formal, the atmosphere is comfortable and relaxed. There are rocking chairs and a well-stocked children's corner in the rear of the main floor. Participants are invited to call out joys and concerns to supplement the Pastoral Prayer.

Baptism

The UCC Book of Worship is the basic outline for services of baptism. We sprinkle / pour water over babies or adults. A recent baptism involved two infants who were cousins. Parents and godparents spoke their promises, and the congregation spoke ours. There was special music, and the newest Christians were introduced and received with joyful hearts.

Words used to describe good preaching are: inspiring; thoughtful; relevant; accessible. We value getting a message or thought to carry with us through the week. Like most people, we cherish stories. We want to be challenged as well as lifted up.

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

Our continuing faith formation is led by both the Pastor and Board of Faith Formation and Discipleship. Our Interim Pastor led a lectio divina study group in Lent and Advent both in person and on Zoom. The Discipleship board plans and hosts monthly Spirits and Social Justice gatherings at a local pub. Topics have included transgender experience, refugee response, and food insecurity. We also hosted Our Whole Lives sexuality training; half the participants were community members.

During Lent 2023, we followed “Seeking: Honest Questions for Deeper Faith” from A Sanctified Art LLC in study group and Sunday worship.

Pilgrim has experienced in waves the classic conundrum of lacking youth to support a ministry, therefore not having a ministry for children and youth. We are currently at low tide.

Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

Organization:

Pilgrim Church respects the polity of the United Church of Christ and honors the agency of each member.

The Council is responsible for overall coordination of the church program. The Council membership consists of: Moderator, Moderator-elect, Member at Large, one representative from each of three boards, Treasurer, up to three Honorary Deacons, and the Clerk. The Pastor serves as co-chair.

(Honorary Deacons and Deaconesses are lay leaders who have given long service on boards over time. We recognize this as an unusual practice in the UCC but honor the tradition.)

The three boards act in their areas of responsibility. They are Diaconate, Faith Formation and Discipleship, and Trustees. Our Constitution calls for nine board members elected for staggered three-year terms. Each board chooses its own chair and scribe. Several subcommittees are outlined in our Constitution. Each board decides whether to meet in person or online.

The size of our governance structure is a challenge. It has been difficult to recruit board membership over the last few years. Response to one-off projects or efforts is usually stronger.

Communicating decisions:

We publish a short weekly email newsletter, a longer monthly email and printed newsletter (both available on our website), Sunday worship bulletins, and occasional US Mail letters. Announcements may be made in Sunday worship. We have just begun using *One Call Now*.

Boards approve their meeting minutes by email, and the church administrator distributes them to the Pastor, other boards, and Council. We strive to post minutes in the member section of our website, but timely upkeep is difficult.

Boards spend about ten hours per month total in meeting time (2-2 ½ hours each). The Pastor participates in all those boards, and the property manager meets with trustees. Staff meetings are additional.

Ability to act quickly:

When the COVID-19 emergency occurred, the Pastor and Council, led by the Moderator, took input from various groups. For example, Food Pantry volunteers tried to adapt delivery methods to stay open safely to serve our clients, but quickly, all agreed to end in-person gatherings. We moved online for worship, education, and governance, primarily via Zoom. We then secured the necessary equipment and volunteers to live-stream and record worship services. The Council promptly developed criteria and a plan for re-opening and communicated it through all our existing communication vehicles.

Documents: We can provide documents on governance and annual reports.

3b. 11-YEAR REPORT

Attached

3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	66	Estimated active members over last 2 years
Number of active non-members:	10	Yes
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	76	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:	70%	Yes
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	20%	Yes
Less than 5 years:	10%	Yes

Number of total participants by age:

0-11	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	<i>Are these numbers an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
6				5	5	20	30	10	Yes

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	1%	Yes
Households with minors:	5%	Yes
Single adults age 35-65:	10%	Yes
Joint households with no minors:	70%	Yes
Single adults over 65:	15%	Yes

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	100%	Yes
College:	70%	Yes
Graduate School:	30%	Yes
Specialty Training:	5%	Yes
Other (please specify):	5%	Yes

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	25%	Yes
Adults who are retired:	70%	Yes
Adults who are not fully employed:	5%	Yes

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

Pilgrim members are represented across a broad range of occupations and professions, from dishwasher at a local restaurant to District Court of Appeals Judge (retired). Several members are or were employed in health care, education, law, and non-profits. A few own and operate small businesses. Several are former members of the UCC national staff. Retired clergy members are also present. We note that we have served as home for several in-care seminarians who have moved on to pastoral and church leadership roles.

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

European American heritages are strongly represented among the membership. Some have recent immigrant roots while others have been in the U.S.A. for generations. Several active members are from African American families.

Pilgrim's primary diversities are socio-economic, sexual orientation and gender identity, and religious tradition of origin. Some members receive Medicaid and SNAP benefits while others are financially secure. Most fall in between.

Pilgrim has been an Open and Affirming congregation since 1993 and has embraced and celebrated the spectrum of human sexuality and gender identity. More than one third of active members identify as LGBTQ+.

More than half of our members come from religious traditions outside the UCC or its predecessor bodies. A large number of those are from Roman Catholic backgrounds, with Protestant denominations and Orthodox traditions also represented.

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

We were beginning to address equipping ourselves to better welcome people with mental illnesses when COVID-19 and our pastoral transition occurred. During our Congregational Conversations over the past year, we determined our Ministry / Mission focus to be:

Helping and being with those in need who are not Pilgrim people (such as persons experiences physical, emotional, relational, socio-economic, spiritual challenges and dis-ease or illness);

Helping and being with LGBTQ+ persons and families;

Being with and welcoming all.

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	7	Pastor
Baptisms (<i>number last year</i>)	2	Pastor / Diaconate
Children's Groups or Classes	3	Faith Formation and Discipleship Board
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	45 12/24/22 76 4/9/23	Really bad snowstorm! Pastor and Diaconate
Church-wide Meals	30	Diaconate
Choirs and Music Groups	10	Bells choir and singers – Pastor and members
Church-based Bible Study	7	Pastor
Communion (<i>served how often?</i>)	40	Monthly, Diaconate
Community Meals	none	
Confirmation (<i>number confirmed last year</i>)	none	
Drama or Dance Program	NA	
Funerals (<i>number last year</i>)	3 - Memorial	Pastor - Diaconate
Intergenerational Groups	12	Spirits and Social Justice – Faith Formation and Discipleship
Outdoor Worship	35	1-2 /year, Pastor and Diaconate
Prayer or Meditation Groups	25	Called to Care Ministry
Public Advocacy Work	5	Initiated by individuals and Faith Formation and Discipleship

Retreats	1	Leadership, annual - Council
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community	NA	
Weddings (<i>number last year</i>)	1	Pastor
Worship (time slot: __10am____)	50	One worship service, in person and live streamed
Worship (time slot: _____)		
Young Adult Groups or Classes	NA	
Youth Groups or Classes	NA	
Other: Food Pantry	15 (2 x week)	Team of four from within Food Pantry Ministry

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

Name	Three- or Four-Way Covenant? (3 or 4 or No)	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired? (Y or N)
Halldor Gudmundsson	4-way covenant	United Methodist	Pastor	No
J. Bennett Guess	4-way covenant	ACLU Ohio	Ex. Director	No
Bentley de Bardelaben-Phillips	No	UCC Justice and Local Ministries	Executive Associate	No
Michael Scheunemeyer	No	UCC Justice and Local Ministries	Health and Wholeness Minister	Yes

Kathy Moody-Arndt	No	United Methodist Church	Pastor	Yes
Mary Sustar	No	UCC	Chaplain	Yes
David Howell	No	UCC	National Communications, Pastor	Yes
Ed Crabtree	No	UCC, American Baptist, Christian Church Disciples of Christ	Chaplain, Pastor, Interim Ministry	Yes
Jim Cunningham	No	UCC	Chaplain, Pastor, Interim Ministry	Yes
Dick Sparrow	No	UCC	Association and National Staff, Interim Ministry, Chaplain	Yes

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
Intentional Interim	Yes	FT	Council	18 months - ongoing
Property Manger		FT	Pastor and Trustees	2 plus years
Financial Admin		PT	Pastor and Trustees	11 plus years

Office Admin		PT	Pastor and Trustees	Ongoing
Organist-Pianist		PT	Pastor and Diaconate	Starts June 2023
Custodians		PT	Property Manager	Ongoing

REFLECTION

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

We are in a season of transition from a medium sized congregation with multiple programs to a smaller one seeking to be who God calls us to be now. The COVID-19 pandemic and recent pastoral transition hit us hard. The interim period has helped us see ourselves more clearly and brought us face to face with some of the issues we have been glimpsing for some time, most particularly sustainability and recovery from the COVID-19 disruptions. But not just recovery, for we have learned a lot about effective ministry in this new day. Instead of edging toward the future, we are seeking to face it creatively and faithfully. We have many gifts and assets, and call one another, with the prophet David, to “[pitch our] tent in the land of hope.” (Acts 2:26, The Message)

3e. CHURCH FINANCES

Attach most recent church budget, spending plan, operating statement, or annual treasurer’s report as shared publicly with the congregation, Annual Report Attached.

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

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$189,400
Endowment Proceeds (<i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i>)	\$85,000
Endowment Draw (<i>from gain, not principal</i>)	\$0
Fundraising Events	\$200
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$0
Grants	\$0
Rentals of Church Building	\$46,325

Rentals of Church Parsonage NA	\$0
Support from Related Organizations NA (e.g. Women's Group)	\$0
Transfers from Special Accounts NA	\$0
Other (specify): Living Water Association	\$15,000
Other (specify):	\$0
TOTAL	\$335,925

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year): **\$598,033.00**

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

The following are wages and benefits as a % of revenue: 38% for Intentional Interim Pastor, 38% for staff, benefits 2%, other 4%, 82% total.

2023 budget reflects up to \$262,108 in additional "income" from endowment principal for expenses. 2022 income was aided by and additional \$115,000 draw from endowment principal for necessary building maintenance and repair.

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? **Yes**

- 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?

Denominational support is a line item under Outreach at 5%

What is the church's current indebtedness? **0**

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.

Upkeep and maintenance are ongoing.

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

Our last capital campaign in 2007 made major steps in accessibility with an elevator serving three levels and an ADA first floor restroom.

Does your church have an endowment? **Yes**

What is the market value of the assets? **\$2,242,861 as of 1/6/2023**

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

Interest income is drawn regularly. Additional draws occur by congregational vote for building maintenance and payroll.

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

The annual draw has been a consistent 4-5% for many years.

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

\$85,000 from interest income. In 2022 and 2023 (projected), an additional draw from endowment principal will be made for ongoing building maintenance and payroll.

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

At our recent rate of about \$100,000 per year, our endowment will last 16-20 years. Additional principal draws, as reflected in our 2023 budget, may not be annual expenditures. Such draws would exhaust the endowment more quickly.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

Pilgrim has affirmed remaining in this building and joining with a yet to be determined partner/s to share in building and grounds assets and costs. We have just begun our process to find a partner and expect to finalize within five years. We are committed to spending endowment monies as necessary to maintain and improve the building and grounds to advance ministry and mission in full expectation of a partner joining us.

Other Assets

Reserves (savings):

\$73,000 average monthly balance

Investments (other than endowment):

None

Does your church have a parsonage?

No

Describe all buildings owned by the church:

Main building, attached Annex (gymnasium with locker rooms and lower floor office space), and 2007 connecting building

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs?

Balcony level, sanctuary, chapel, lower hall, parlor, first and second floor restrooms, lower-level offices and classrooms. Not pulpit, choir and organ loft or annex.

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

We have a large 1893 building on the institutional church model. Since the 1990s we have made significant physical improvements. We have addressed electrical systems, plumbing, roofing, exterior stone maintenance, meeting spaces, classrooms, community use gymnasium, bell tower, organ refurbishment, and restored our sanctuary to its original Victorian design. These improvements were funded from our budget and several successful capital campaigns. The last campaign was primarily about wheelchair accessibility to restrooms and most areas of the church.

In 2022, we made a major budgeting change by proposing to the Annual Meeting the use of endowment funds for building maintenance in response to a major structural concern the prior year. The congregation agreed that it was time to invest in the maintenance of our historic building. Endowment draw is reflected in our 2023 budget too.

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.

Institutional Church

Pilgrim Church was built to serve members, neighbors, and the many immigrants being drawn to the industrializing neighborhood. In 1893, its spaces were designed to nurture spiritual, educational, cultural, social, and economic growth and well-being. The new building could hold 1,000 people in the auditorium and another 1,000 in the Sabbath School. The Akron Plan allowed the main floor spaces to be combined for shared experiences. The lower level and later an annex provided more classroom and recreational space.

In 2023 the congregation met, discussed, and reaffirmed its commitment to the community by remaining in our building and making it available to serve contemporary needs.

Open and Affirming

In 1993, Pilgrim voted, after a thorough study and reflection process, to become an Open and Affirming congregation, one of the first in Ohio. Our membership shifted from neighborhood legacy members to a more diverse and cosmopolitan membership that drew many members from the suburbs.

Last ten years

Losing a beloved settled pastor is always difficult, but our transition occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic was especially hard. We have seen membership loss and a significant drop in worship attendance.

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

Before COVID-19, worship and other offerings were mainly on site. When the pandemic arrived, we took multiple steps: worship was cancelled, then modified to accommodate social distancing and masks, hand sanitizing. Our habits of singing and hugging or shaking hands had to be put aside. Online communication vehicles had to be expanded.

We adapted quickly and inexpensively to online worship, moving from members using their cell phones to laptops to cameras on tripods, then adding microphones and sound boards, trying different platforms. Staff, leaders, and volunteers ramped up to adapt to remote participation. We recognize that a permanent, professional quality installation is crucial now for remote participation and to make our space attractive to other users who now assume the ability to a high quality livestream. We are currently receiving bids from vendors and are committed to the investment.

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.

There is nothing new about conflict in Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ, from inception in 1859 until today. There are differing points of view on mission, budget, communion, music, and a host of others. The large to the small have been the focus of discussion, discernment, and in the end, voting. Most policy changes are the subject of board or committee resolution, but major directional changes, such as voting to be Just Peace, or Open and Affirming, were the subject of congregational meetings, discussions, and discernment with the notion that every view, including minority views, needed to be heard and respected.

The 2018 decision to become a Sanctuary Church followed the pattern of study, prayer, and voting. Our pastor was present for the decision, but lay leaders were responsible for directing the process. The Pastor helped keep us centered on our core values and offered spiritual guidance but did not direct the outcome. We put that decision into action by housing a person in disputed status, and sometimes his children, for many months.

Last year, there was significant upset when a change had to be made regarding a well-liked staff member. The Trustees and other lay leaders held numerous meetings and interventions to try to resolve a situation that had escalated to a point of separation. While we respect and support transparency, we had to balance the privacy of the staff member and the employment relationship. We reached out to the congregation in many ways, assuring them that many views were considered, and that the change was well thought out and necessary to the health and best interest of the church.

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

Staff member's name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Kelly J. Burd	2014-2021	Y
John Tamilio III	2008-2012	Y
Laurinda Hafner	1990-2006	Y

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

In the past two years, Pilgrim Church has learned that we relied heavily on the Pastor to initiate programs, generate, and implement ideas. Unfortunately, such one-sided leadership leads to fatigue and burnout. Our Interim Pastor has helped our leadership become more forward thinking and resilient, and encouraged creative, entrepreneurial thinking. In the future, we envision a model of both lay and Pastor-led initiatives to further our mission.

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

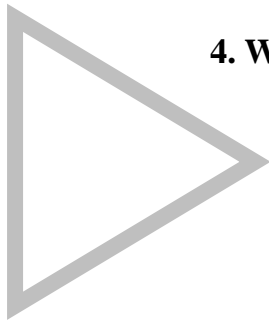
Ask us

Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?

Yes

Has 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?

Pilgrim Ministry and Mission Focus, discerned from 2022 congregational conversations:

Helping and being with those in need

Pilgrim volunteers have hosted a Food Pantry twice weekly for 18 years, providing our neighbors with healthy food and staples. Resources are now shared monthly to expand Pilgrim members’ understanding of hunger and food insecurity locally and globally, and to encourage advocacy for more just food policies.

Spirits and Social Justice is hosted monthly by our Faith Formation and Discipleship team at a local pub. Community based speakers share an overview of their mission and work, enabling participants to better understand the needs, issues and challenges facing our community and determine how we might engage. Recent topics were: transgender issues; Our Whole Lives sexuality curriculum; refugee resettlement and immigration; elections; healthcare systems; and at-risk youth. We have implemented a composting initiative. Collectively we have acted to support local Ukrainian refugees.

We had a strong contingent at the Women’s March, and the 2020 March for Our Lives.

Helping and being with LGBTQ+ persons and families

Pilgrim was first in the now called Living Water Association to complete the study/discernment process and vote to be an Open and Affirming congregation. Pilgrim is recognized as being a safe space and fierce advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. We joyously participate in Cleveland's annual PRIDE celebration and boldly proclaim that there are Christian churches that fully welcome, support, and affirm LGBTQ+ persons.

In 2022, Pilgrim hosted a Trans Day of Remembrance service to commemorate those persons who were lost to violence or suicide over the past year. It was a moving and well attended ecumenical and community event which included many family members of those lost.

Pilgrim is currently exploring relationship with an organization that claims the intersection of faith, human sexuality, and gender identity.

Being with and welcoming to all

Pilgrim works consistently, as individuals and systemically, to be welcoming to all. Becoming an A2A church is a goal for the next five years.

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

Pilgrim is privileged to have current and former national staff as members. They often interpret and connect us to wider ministries of the UCC. Our clergy are regular participants in Association and Conference meetings. The weekly e-news from the Living Water Association is distributed to the congregation. Several members use the UCC Daily Devotional in their spiritual practice. Members participate in Association and National webinars. Association staff have been present in worship, preaching and representing the Association in ordinations and services of release. Association, Conference, National, and Global ministries are supported by OCWM and all five Special Mission Offerings.

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

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accessible to All (A2A)
(aspirational) | <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> God Is Still Speaking (GISS) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other UCC designations:
Sanctuary |
| <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?

During our season of transition and interim ministry, we have focused on who God is calling us to become. Our GISS and ONA witnesses remain strong. We expect our Just Peace and Sanctuary ministries to be renewed as we move forward with the mission focus developed in our recent congregational conversations. We aspire to become an A2A congregation in the next five years.

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

Pilgrim shares seasonal worship experiences with local congregations of various denominations, such as World AIDS Day, Christmas Sunday, Good Friday, and Transgender Day of Remembrance. We joyfully join the multi-congregation UCC contingent at Cleveland PRIDE, marching together and offering a welcoming presence.

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.

Pilgrim Vision and Mission Statements adopted in January 2022.

Vision: In faith, we embrace a vision of a just, peaceful, sustainable, and loving world for all.

Mission: United in Spirit and inspired by Christ, our mission is to create a loving and inclusive community through worship and acts of social justice, service, peacemaking, and inspiration.

In this transition/ interim season, we have spent a good deal of intentional time in congregational conversations. Given our UCC polity, we have spent significant time on governance. We envision streamlining our governance to better fit our size and capacity.

The twice weekly Food Pantry represents our most regular and significant time spent engaging the wider community. In 2022, a cohort of fifteen volunteers contributed more than 1,200 hours in service to 2,498 persons.

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?

Our next settled pastor will walk alongside the congregation to equip and encourage us in fulfilling our stated mission. Together, we will extend our ministry locally and on behalf of the wider church. We have a holy impatience to move beyond our own needs and do our work in the world.

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 gathered MissionInsite data for the whole of Cuyahoga County, as Pilgrim membership comes from throughout the county and beyond. The neighborhoods around Pilgrim are generally representative of the full county. As in most urban cities in the USA, demographics can shift dramatically from one neighborhood to another. (The MissionInsite report is available for review.)

Racial/Ethnicity as a percentage of the population reflect 2% Pacific Islander/American Indian/Other; 3% Asian; 5% Hispanic/Latino; 28% Black/African American; 61% White.

Age trends predicted for 2021-2031 show growth in the 0-4 and 65 and over categories. Categories: ages 5-17; 25-30 and 35-54 show less than a 1% decline while ages 18-24 and 55-64 reflect a more significant decline.

The age data reflects population growth among Older Boomers (65+ years) and Young Parent(s) families with young children (0-4 yrs.) .

MissionInsite also reflects the neighborhoods around Pilgrim church. Tremont, Ohio City, Old Brooklyn, downtown Cleveland are a mix of younger and older; unemployed, blue collar and white-collar workers; unhoused, multiple generation houses; renters in sub-standard to luxury rentals and homeowners. There has been significant gentrification of the Tremont, Ohio City and downtown Cleveland neighborhoods in the last 30 years.

The ReligiousInsite Priorities for Cuyahoga County reveal 61% of the population is not involved in a religious congregation or community. Top ranking priorities (very strong to somewhat strong agreement) of survey respondents include:

Beliefs about God: 1. God is love and invites the world into loving relationship.

Beliefs about Jesus: 1. People in the church do not behave as Jesus would.

2. Belief in Jesus does not require participation in a church.

3. Jesus was both human and divine.

Beliefs about Social and Moral Values:

1. Strong families are key to social stability.

2. America has a moral responsibility to be a force for good in the world.

3. Tolerance is necessary for social peace and wellbeing.

The MissionInsite data reveals a large percentage of neighbors who are not church affiliated yet express interest in engaging in the same mission and ministry goals of Pilgrim: to be with those in need; supporting the LGBTQ+ community and welcoming all. Rather than focusing primarily on drawing our neighbors in, we can meet our neighbors where they are and join together to do what we (Pilgrim) believe to be Christ's work.

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?

Pilgrim's membership/community reflects similar age trends to the MissionInsite report. We have a few young children (0-4 yrs.) and many members in the 65+ age category. We reflect a diversity of educational, occupational and income brackets.

The percentage of LGBTQ+ members of Pilgrim is likely higher than the surrounding neighborhoods. We are also less racially diverse.

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

Food insecure people within a two-mile radius of Pilgrim make up the vast majority of Food Pantry clients.

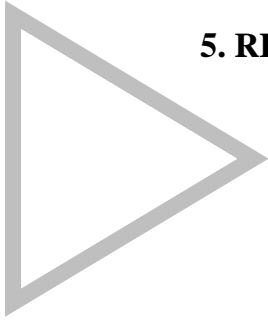
LGBTQ+ people and families are present throughout Cuyahoga County and beyond. We strive to be supportive members and advocates for this community.

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

Pilgrim is known for being a church that “helps” people, is LGBTQ+ affirming, and welcomes all. Pilgrim encourages fine arts by inviting local art groups to use its space.

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

There have been few new people since the onset of the COVID pandemic. Some of the newer members (over the last decade) have expressed their appreciation for a congregation where they can be and worship as their authentic selves. Those who have joined often refer to the welcoming /accepting attitude they encounter. Many say this acceptance is what drew them to the church. They feel they can belong.



5. REFERENCES.

REFERENCE 1

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Friend and Sabbatical Pastor of Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Cleveland

REFERENCE 2

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Former Interim Pastor

REFERENCE 3

Halldor Elias Gudmundson

Pastor, Church of the Redeemer UMC, Cleveland Heights, OH

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Former Director of Christian Education, Pilgrim Church

2015-2019

REFERENCE 4

J. Atlee Horner III

Live-streaming tech volunteer with Pilgrim Church/ Chicago Theological Seminary student

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Volunteer. Member of Plymouth UCC, Shaker Heights, OH

Pilgrim Congregational UCC

REFERENCE 1

Geoffrey A. Black

Former UCC General Minister and President (Retired)

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Friend of the Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Cleveland

Pilgrim Church is a very welcoming congregation with long standing commitments to justice, peace, equality, and inclusion of all God's people. These characteristics are attributes that undergird areas of strength in Pilgrim's ministry. A primary strength here is inspiring and thoughtful worship. This is a congregation that is attentive to the preached word, while it also values the inspiration of good music in worship. Also, Pilgrim is a historic church that continues to be engaged in a mission of service and compassionate care in its neighboring community. Its food pantry, community garden, and clothes closet continue to meet the needs of people in need in Tremont and neighboring communities.

Pilgrim has been a home for and proponent of the arts in the community. I see this as yet another strength of its ministry.

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

Pilgrim would do well to rethink its worship ways to engage the congregation more effectively. Today Pilgrim is a smaller, somewhat older congregation than it was a decade ago. It is a congregation too small to effectively use its beautiful, but very large sanctuary for weekly Sunday morning worship. The sanctuary would be a better venue for special occasions, while Sunday morning worship in one of the smaller spaces in the church would draw members closer together and make worship more intimate and inspiring.

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

Pilgrim's public presence and witness have been a strong and consistent aspect of its ministry. One significant way that I have experienced Pilgrim's ministry is when I have encountered many of its members and leaders on the streets of Cleveland at events like the Women's March and the March for Our Lives, the annual Pride Parade, peace and justice vigils.

While serving as a pastoral presence during the former pastor's sabbatical, I had the opportunity to observe the very thoughtful, compassionate, and respectful manner that members of the church, who volunteer in the church food pantry, have as they relate to the cliental. It was impressive.

Anything else you wish to share.

I believe that Pilgrim UCC Cleveland is a healthy and vibrant community of faith. Like many historic churches, it faces the challenge of owning and maintaining a building that is not well suited to its current needs. This is not an insurmountable challenge, but it is one that cannot be ignored or evaded.

It was my honor and privilege to serve Pilgrim Congregational, UCC in the Tremont area of Cleveland as Interim Minister from October 2012 to January 2014. During that time I came to love and hold the members of this church in high regard for a variety of reasons.

First and foremost is their commitment to be the Church and to share the love of Christ with all people. Many people come from beyond Cleveland to attend this church because they believe in Pilgrim's commitment to being a diverse, open and affirming and just peace church. They stand with and serve the people of Tremont as well as the wider community and world. They stood in solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community until there was equality in marriage and they continue to engage in the work for equal rights for all people. They host the food pantry, have a community garden and continue to let many different organizations use the building. There are so many ways they have engaged with the wider church in efforts to love and assist people.

Secondly, is their strength of character during difficult and stressful times and transitions. They are not afraid to look at themselves and make difficult decisions. This congregation was a large, multi-staff led church that went through downsizing for a variety of reasons prior to my arrival. During my time with them we worked on processing the anger and sadness around that experience. Much of the work took place during a process of reevaluating who they were and wanted to be as a church. This process involved looking at their history, evaluating the mission and vision of the church and recognizing the strengths and challenges of the congregation to live them out. This process also involved celebrating who and what they were, mourning what they had lost and acknowledging the wounds that still needed healing. It was a lively, challenging, humorous, poignant, and in the end, a growth experience.

Healing from the stress and tension around the losses they experienced definitely occurred, but I think there is scarring that continues to have an impact on the life of the church. Part of this plays out in the fact they are still learning what it means to be a congregation that works alongside and with the pastor instead of being a church that has staff organizing and leading the mission and ministry of the church.

Currently, there is sadness and mourning as people leave to attend other churches, as people become homebound and as people die. And, it goes without saying that there are also challenges with the large, old building. From what I have observed

during the times they have invited me back, they are trying to address these issues while loving each other, finding joy and hope, and serving the community as best they can.

I'm biased, but I think anyone who comes to serve at Pilgrim, although they will face challenges, will be blessed by the love, joy and commitment of this congregation.

Rev. Ellen Palmer Marsey

Halldor Elias Gudmundsson pastor at Church of the Redeemer UMC, in Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

Halldor was a part-time Director for Christian Education at Pilgrim Congregational from 2015-2019. He also helped the congregation with worship livestream 2020-2021.

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Pilgrim Congregational UCC is an active, social justice minded, open and affirming congregation in a vibrant neighborhood in Cleveland. Pilgrim's most important strength is that it's members care and the care deeply about justice. Pilgrim has some element of being a family church, but it's members are family by choice not by blood. Their commitment to their food pantry, participation at the Pride, and their willingness to step up for justice is their biggest strength.

Pilgrim as I know it is doing more than you can expect from a group of so few people. I joked nearly 8 years ago that they are a pastor size church, operating a program size model, and an outward presence like an institutional church. This situation was probably not viable, even though it was awesome to work in such a church.

Under the leadership of Rev. Arlen G. Vernava, intentional interim minister, the church has been reflecting on their past and their future, in attempt to become more viable. The most complex variable in their ministry is their building. It is way too large and expensive to keep for this size of a congregation, but at the same time the building is a vital asset for the church. The models that are being implemented are exciting.

Pilgrim Congregational UCC changed the way I see church ministry. They are an active bunch of people for others, and the day I stood below the steps listening to a press meeting, as the church became an active sanctuary church, housing an immigrant that was under a threat of deportation, I felt strongly this was not only a church, this was God's Church. It is a church willing to take the extra step to reflect glimpses of God's reign over its neighborhood, over its city, over its state. Pilgrim does reflect glimpses of God's reign, as they feed their neighbors through their food pantry, as they walk in the Pride for the 29 time this year, or as they housed Eulogio, while his case was being re-addressed.

Reference 4

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Live-stream volunteer staff

Long before visiting the church, I had heard about the incredibly active and engaged Pilgrim community through its participation in various LGBT support programs and its focus on social justice within the community. At many Pride events, I remember being amazed by the size and energy of the Pilgrim marchers. As a member of Plymouth, I always hoped that we could match your enthusiasm and commitment to the cause.

In 2021, I asked if Pilgrim would like any extra help with their worship streaming program. At that point, I was welcomed into the community as a volunteer streamer for Sunday services. At every step of the way, Pilgrim members and staff were welcoming, supportive, and embodied the 'Exuberant Welcome' culture so famous in the UCC. Since those early days of covid, it has been a pleasure for me to volunteer to stream at Pilgrim once a month. And, recently, I have taken great joy in volunteering twice a month in Pilgrim food pantry program on Tuesday mornings.

AREAS OF STRENGTH

Without any doubt, Pilgrim's greatest strength is its commitment to social justice and its commitment to being a welcoming congregation to everyone. The people involved in the outreach efforts (outside community) have been engaged in this commitment to their neighbors for decades and one can feel that this commitment flows directly from each person's Christian faith and love for all of God's diverse community. As we often say in the UCC, "no matter where you are in life's journey, you are welcome here" is not simply a statement of faith that is repeated before communion each month. It is the soul of the Pilgrim community. When I travel around the Cleveland area, I speak so highly of Pilgrim UCC, your past and your future.

Along with your commitment to promoting God's love and justice, you are also a congregation where every member knows each other. You are a caring community who not only takes the time to care for your ill and aging members, you know each other's strengths and gifts and are not afraid to call upon them for their help or expertise. Having worked as International Director of a Catholic non-profit, I often noticed that in many Catholic settings, many of the congregation would leave following the Eucharist. But, at Pilgrim UCC, I think everyone who attends regular Sunday services hangs around and attends the coffee hour afterwards. This sense of community as family is wonderful and it demonstrates a commitment to serving God by being in community with each other. This is a theological strength, in my opinion.

Finally, although I am only a visitor, an outsider who glances from time to time into your community, I also have noticed that you have a commitment to adapt, change, grow and stay relevant. When covid struck, you did not delay in finding an inexpensive way to continue to offer Sunday services to your community. You didn't wait for committees to study the issue and approve large expenditures. Rather, you moved quickly to find a fiscally reasonable way to move forward on streaming not knowing how long the pandemic would last.

Additionally, I have heard nothing but a willingness to find new ways to reach out and attract new members. Some ideas draw from service to the surrounding community while other ideas suggest offering free car washes and picnics as a way to simply hit the radar of people who are looking for a faith community. "We don't do that here" is something that I have never heard at Pilgrim UCC unless it is in the context of exclusion and hate. There is an understanding that faith communities do need to adapt to the time and reality of its members and community. I have seen a real commitment to moving forward in faith and commitment to building God's kin_dom of justice.

IMPROVEMENT

Unfortunately, Pilgrim UCC suffers from a similar reality that much of mainline Protestantism is facing: a falling number of members and regular attendees. Having been part of your community as a visitor for 2 years, I certainly can tell you that this is not due to a lack of warmth or welcoming. Rather, I feel that it is the reality that so many churches find themselves facing with a changing demographic and culture. But, you are located in an area with many young people who may be beginning to form families. I have seen your interest in finding ways to reach out to them. This is an effort that some many churches face but I can attest that you recognize the changing demographics and culture and realize that you can't wait for people to walk through the doors. You must go out into the community and be a magnet for people that brings them back through the doors. So, while regular attendance may be your greatest challenge, I also take comfort in realizing that you have a commitment to this neighborhood, this community, and this mission, and you will adapt and address this area of concern.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENE

As a 53 year old who has been involved in multiple faith communities and worked with overseas missions, I have seen some congregations suffer from a problem where new comers, new ideas, and volunteers are often intimidated by those in leadership who often find their area to be their fiefdom. Their sense of commitment, unfortunately, though coming from good intention, actually can create a toxic environment that pushes people away. Pilgrim does NOT suffer from this common ailment.

From the minute that I walked through your doors on the first day (as a visitor), everyone welcomed me. Yes, Brad was organizing streaming but I was introduced to Susan who regularly helps with cameras, and the minister, and the church's secretary, and the music director, and several other regular volunteers. Although a hierarchy exists on paper, there was nothing but we-are-in-this-together approach to how your community operates. When a problem would develop with the streaming equipment, instead of being told to "just tell Brad", I was given support in my willingness to investigate it myself and try to fix it. Territoriality can kill a sense of community but your wonderful community does not have that problem.

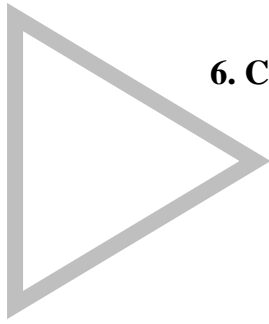
Each Sunday that I would stream the service, different church members would come up to me and touch my shoulder, welcome me and thank me for my time. And, after the 1st work, everyone seemed to know my name. I cannot tell you how wonderful it is as a new visitor to have everyone know my name. To be greeted right off the bat with, "Good morning, Jay, great to see you", this says so much about not just your heart but your faith commitments!

I have recently begun helping with your food pantry program. For my first day, I received 100% of the support that I needed. Time was taken to show me around the facility. The process was explained and even the rationale behind the process. A clear effort was made to make me feel comfortable before throwing me into the first day of volunteering. The program is so well organized and the men and women who volunteer are truly committed to the cause. I can tell that they know the names and stories of the regular clients. And, unlike certain food pantries that I have seen, this is one so free of shame and judgement. It is wonderful.

And, I will always remember something that I overheard while I was packing up to leave on my first day there. The clients had left; the doors were locked and everyone was putting on their coats and preparing to leave. I was out of sight getting my coat when I overheard a soft spoken volunteer mention to her friend, "So, this Jay, do you think that he will be back or was this a one-time thing?" She had no idea that I had overheard her. I came out of the back room and said to the lady at the computer, "so, when can I volunteer again?" Although not a member, I took pride just being part of the community and its work.

I am a member of Plymouth Church of Shaker Heights; I am either a committee member or chairman of at least a half-dozen committees/programs there. I am a seminary student and board member on various non-profits around town. But, in that moment, I wanted to commit my body and soul to being part of the Pilgrim Community for more than a day. The more that your members are able to interact with the public and let the love and welcome of Pilgrim be seen and experienced outside of its walls, the more people, like me, who will be drawn to your community.

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6. CLOSING THOUGHTS

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

6a. CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Heavenly God, for Pilgrim, its members, and the wider community, we pray for our future and our future Pastor. We pray that with your help and our own studied insight, we will be able to discern the right path to take for our church. Our hope is that this new person will join us in living into a bright new future. It will be a new day for all of us since much has changed in our world in the last few years. We know that change will continue, as it always has, throughout human history, but you will be with us always.

We hope that we always remember the message of Philippians 4:4-7: “Rejoice in [God] always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. [God] is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

(The Good News Bible)

6b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT

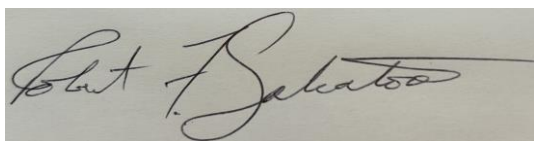
The covenantal relationship between a church and those called by that church to serve as pastors and teachers and in other ministerial positions is strengthened when vital information is openly shared by covenantal partners. To that end, we attest that, to the best of our abilities, we have provided 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.

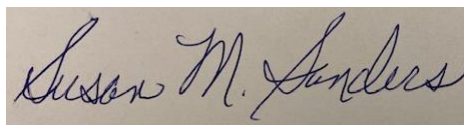
Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile?

The Congregation contributed to all the content through congregational conversations. The Interim Pastor collated data and facilitated conversations. The Church Council, functioning as Transition Team, filled out the Profile.

Signed:



Rob Salvatore, Moderator
25 May 2023



Susan Sanders, Search and Call Committee
25 May 2023

6c. VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

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

Staff Comment:

An Open and Affirming, committed to justice and peace, Pilgrim UCC is a congregation exploring its ministry possibilities for the future, including partnerships with its wider community. A strong, active and engaged beyond its walls, Pilgrim is a faith community who appreciates spirituality and theological discourse, justice and diversity, with commitment to pluralism, inclusion and extravagant welcome. Pilgrim will benefit immensely from a pastor whose gifts include thoughtful preaching and visionary leadership as well as community engagement.

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: Nayiri Karjian, Association General Minister

Email: nayiri.agm@livingwaterone.org

Phone: 330-940-2220 x102

Date: May 30, 2023

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



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

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