

Union University Church
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Church Profile 2023
Minister Search

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WHO IS UUC?

The Union University Church (UUC) is located in the Village of Alfred, which is in the Town of Alfred, in the Southern Tier of NYS. The Town and Village take pride in their small town atmosphere with nearby scenic natural resources. The Union University Church is considered a small town church. Although the population of Alfred is small, the Union University Church, because of its unique inter-denominational nature, has members from many surrounding towns, including Wellsville, Almond, Hornell, Arkport, Canaseraga and Andover. Though approximately 69% of congregants are from the local Alfred / Alfred Station community, about one-third travel as many as 25-30 miles on Sunday mornings to attend services. We also have a group of people who attend regularly via ZOOM video conferencing.

We are a community church for people of all denominations. We welcome people of all races, sexual orientation, gender identity, and background into the full life of our church as we fully embrace the belief that every person is made in the image of God.

OUR WORSHIP LIFE

Our worship is congregational and traditional in style, deliberately designed to be welcoming to children and youth and allow participation by all members of the congregation. We generally follow a "low church" order of worship but because we are welcoming of all denominations, the elements of the service may borrow from many traditions including prayers and litanies from the Book of Common Prayer, African-American traditions, Mennonite, United Church of Christ, among others. Pre COVID, we alternated our communion liturgy monthly between a Presbyterian/Baptist pew communion tradition and an Episcopalian/Methodist chalice communion tradition. In addition, we allow families to select between a ceremony of infant baptism or infant dedication for their infants, and baptism by immersion versus confirmation for the youth.

During non-pandemic times, children and youth attend the first part of worship and then are invited to participate in Sunday School until 11:30 am. Presently, children and youth meet one time per month (third Sunday of the month) at 9:30 AM for a Sunday School lesson and activity before church. Nursery care will be available for infants and preschoolers. Throughout the years, UUC has had an active youth group that has ebbed and flowed with the demographics of the church.

UUC worship style has been described by current worshipers as:



OUR CHURCH LIFE

UUC is an active supporter of non-profit entities throughout the year, with a “Mission of the Month” calendar established by the Board of Elders annually. Example missions include: Habitat for Humanity, The Hart Comfort House, Allegany-Cattaraugus-Chautauqua Fund for Women, Christmas boxes for families in need, Journey’s End for Refugees, Alfred Area Food Pantry, among others.

Annually, UUC hosts events to enhance our programming year, including: rally day, hanging of the greens, annual Christmas program / dinner / wish cake ceremony, mid-winter hymn sing, and Children’s Sunday. UUC’s major fundraiser for the church each year is our annual outreach to the community with a Holiday Celebration including a luncheon held between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

UUC has an active book group that meets weekly. The book group votes on books to discuss based on suggestions from our pastor or group members.

OUR CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT

We are what God’s grace has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:8-10), and so we, the members of the Union University Church, commit ourselves to be a church:

- Where people find the support and encouragement needed to live faithfully for Christ,
- Where through worship, sharing, and the study of God’s word we learn to integrate our faith into daily lives,
- Where our children learn integrity and moral courage through our teaching and example,
- And, where we affirm the inclusiveness and the power of God’s love and dedicate ourselves and our resources to making that love manifest in our community and throughout the world.

Through our diverse religious backgrounds, we seek to experience the breadth of God and through our unity to serve Christ always.

WHAT WE BELIEVE / OUR VISION FOR MINISTRY

Our members are committed to listening to one another's ideas and faith experiences, our children and youth are cherished and integrated into the total life of the church, and service to the community and world is a foundation of our ministry. We demonstrate Christ's compassion for others as we address the range of human needs outlined in Matthew 25:34-36: hunger, poverty, incarceration, illness, and the needs of refugees. Through our diverse religious backgrounds, we seek to experience the breadth of God and through our unity to serve Christ always. The percentage of congregation members who are active and/or have leadership roles in a wide variety of service organizations is seen as extraordinary.

Through a survey of the congregation, members shared that if there is a need you will invariably see UUC members in the forefront of a response. They also shared our strengths and opportunities below:

Strengths:

The primary strength of the Union University Church is its openness to all people, welcoming not only people of any sexual orientation, race, or background, but also practicing patience and understanding for the diversity of personalities found within any congregation. People try hard not to engage in interpersonal conflict and church politics, but instead strive to listen to one another and work together in spite of differences among them. It is also unique in that it is a church of progressive values and intellectual curiosity set in a rural small town thus providing a combination not available in many places. Our members share that the congregation serves as the hands and feet of Christ, with a commitment to social justice in serving local and world communities. We have a strong benevolence program with active boards, along with a commitment from the congregation in keeping the church financially strong. Congregants share that we have a traditional worship structure with an informal style, are open/welcoming/inclusive/creative, and have excellent music that inspires and compliments worship. Others also shared that we intentionally involve children and youth in our worship and programs, and have great preaching.

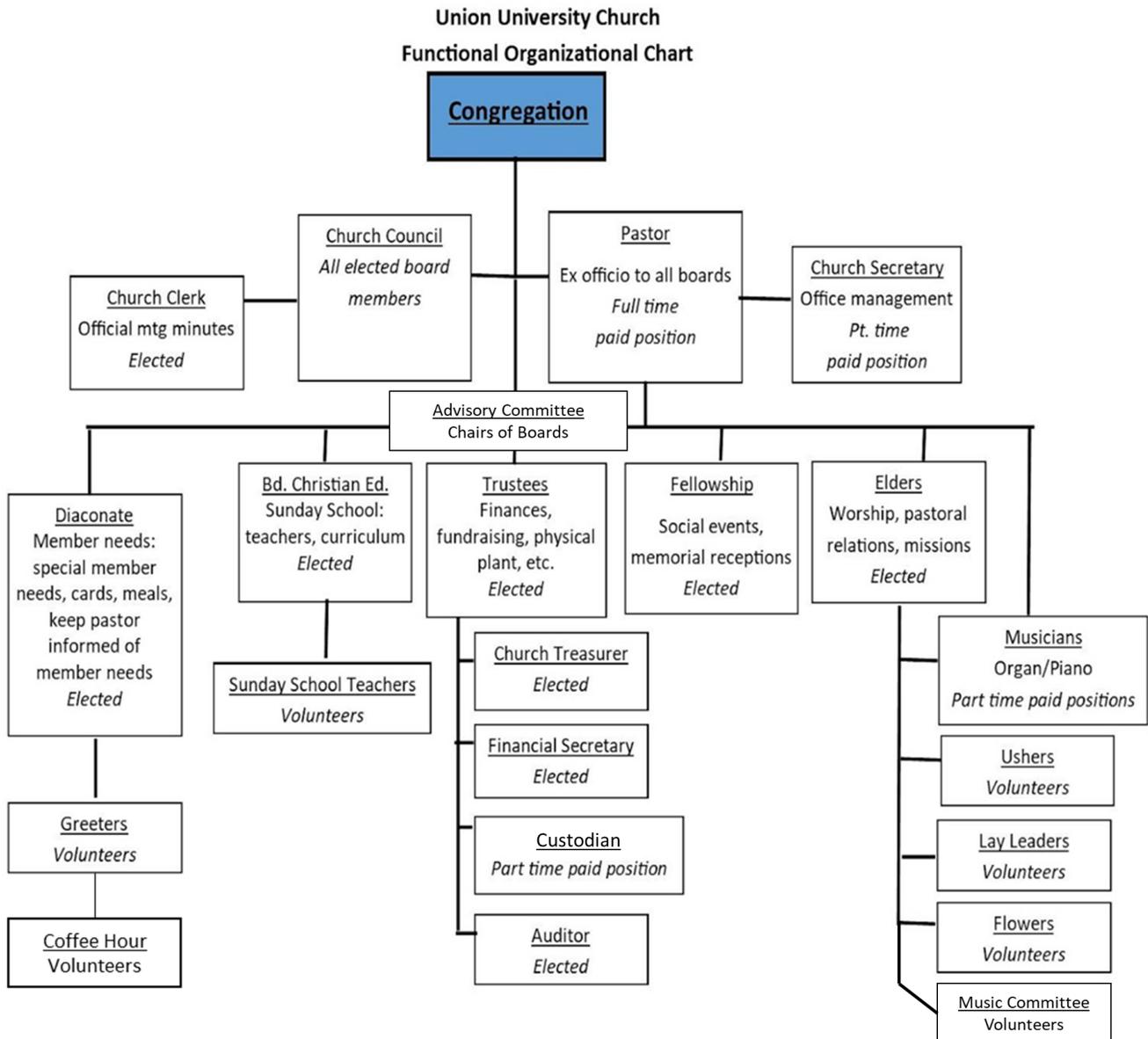
Opportunities / Areas for Growth:

Given the decline in young families seeking out churches that congregations are experiencing across the country, there are opportunities to work together to redefine what constitutes a healthy congregation. Whether it is acknowledging that younger families may be more sporadic in attendance and planning programming accordingly and/or recognizing membership can be refreshed by targeting those age 50+ as well as young families and area students, UUC has a chance to work towards a future that fits the changing demographic. The pandemic has helped to begin to move the church in this direction as we have learned to provide a variety of ways for people to engage with the church through Zoom and social media, and consequently have increased our weekly engagement of members. In addition, our congregation now includes people geographically distant from Alfred.

CONGREGATION'S FORMAL STRUCTURE

UUC is a congregation-led church. We currently have a full-time, paid pastor who guides the church along with the Church Council which oversees several boards who contribute to programming and oversight.

Boards meet monthly and are charged with the duties outlined in the by-laws of the Union University Church (see appendix).



OUR CHURCH HISTORY

The Union University Church was founded by the President of Alfred University, Booth C. Davis, in 1922 with 16 people attending initial worship services. It was originally known as the Union Church of Alfred. It was founded to accommodate residents and students who were accustomed to worshipping on Sunday. Our church was chartered as Union University Church in 1953. There were 101 charter members. Worship was in the sanctuary of the Seventh Day Baptist Church. Until the first full time pastor was hired in 1950, the chaplain at the University fulfilled the pastoral duties.

Though still worshipping in the Seventh Day Baptist sanctuary, the congregation purchased the church center in 1953 as a place for meetings, the pastor's office and a social hall. An addition was completed in 1971 with the present kitchen, bathrooms and social hall. Between 1999-2000, the original section of the church center was renovated, relocating the administrative offices to the first floor and Sunday School rooms to the 2nd floor.

In 2019, at an annual meeting, we voted to accept the offer from the Alfred Seventh Day Baptist congregation to take ownership of the church building. The transfer has been accomplished.

Our UUC'S history has included (50's and 60's) two Sunday services, early for families, and later for students. Presently, we meet together on Sunday at 10:30 in fusion church, with members and friends present and on ZOOM.

Lay leaders lead congregants in responsive readings, prayers, and scriptures, depending on the pastor's design for the worship service in coordination with the Board of Elders.

Music has been and is still an integral part of our history and worship. From the 50's-70's, UUC had a large choir. Presently, we enjoy music with organ and piano, bell choir, bluegrass band, instrumental and voice music, including small group harmony and larger choirs for Lenten and Advent services. The Music Committee was established by the Board of Elders to plan music for worship. Hymns are selected by the Pastor for each service.

OUR HISTORY - MAJOR MILESTONES OF THE UNION UNIVERSITY CHURCH

1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020+
UUC Founded 1922	Women's Guild Formed 1935		Full-time pastor hired 1950	Parsonage purchased 1962	Church center addition 1971		Parsonage sold. Investment, Endowment, Capital Reserve Funds established. Church center renovations 1999-2000			
	Full time Director of Religious Activities appointed 1935		Church incorporat ed 1953							
			Church center property purchased for use 1953					Architectural study completed to assess & obtain recommendations for SDB church	Church foundation & walls secured, roof & eaves repaired, ADA compliance at church and church center, various painting & cosmetic improvements made to both buildings	
									Voted in 2019 to accept an offer from Seventh Day Baptist to take ownership of the church building. Transfer has been completed.	

OUR HISTORY - PASTORS OF THE UNION UNIVERSITY CHURCH

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	2020s
Pastors at UUC	Pastor LeRoy Moser 1950-1956							
	Pastor James Dick 1956-1960	Pastor Richard V. Bergren Jr. 1960-1968						
		Pastor Lawrence A. Littlehale 1969-1975						
			Pastor Albert N. Rogers 1975-1983					
				Pastor Laurie J. DeMott 1983-December 2021 Pastor Louise Barger, Transitional Minister-January 1, 2022-Present Permanent minister search - present				

UUC COMMUNICATION TOOLS

The Union University Church has a strong communications “system” keeping members and friends connected in a variety of ways:

- This Week @ UUC - a weekly email (using MailChimp) sent to all members. It includes announcements as well as the names of upcoming worship leaders.
- UUC Forum - a listserv for members to post items of interest or concern.
- Remind texting service - sends out important announcements via text messaging.
- Fusion Church - using Zoom as part of a worship experience that enables those in the sanctuary to interact with those who worship from home.
- UUC Facebook page - 178 people follow this.
- UUC YouTube Channel - Includes videos of weekly worship services and other videos of interest.
- Minister’s podcasts - uuc.libsyn.com available for posting weekly sermons and Bible stories as desired.
- UUC Website - www.unionuniversitychurch.org - includes information for members and those interested in UUC.
- Newsletter-a monthly newsletter sent to all members and friends - includes a message from the pastor as well as news of church events and other items of interest.

OUTSIDE GROUPS WHO USE CHURCH CENTER

Outside Group	Frequency
Alfred 4 Sobriety (Alcoholics Anonymous)	Weekly
Allegany Office of the Aging Nutrition Site	Three times per week
Boy Scout Troop 19	Weekly
Lions Club	Occasionally
Habitat for Humanity Board	Occasionally
Alfred Area Community Chest	Annually
Allegany-Cattaraugus-Chautauqua Fund for Women	Occasionally
American Association of University Women	Occasionally

HOW OTHERS SEE US

The Union University Church received positive feedback from community members (full feedback can be found in the appendix). While all indicated admiration toward Rev. Laurie DeMott, they also spoke directly to how UUC has impacted the community, as examples:

- *“It takes a church to raise a village, and the Union University Church has been an integral part of that process.”*
- *“From our perspective, the most striking feature of the Union University Church is its nature as a ‘safe’ space in the village.”*
- *“The Union University Church is a stronghold of comfort and guidance that’s outreach is way beyond its doors.”*
- *“The Church sets an example of being welcoming to ALL in the community, not only those who are, or will become, members of its congregation.”*
- *“The Union University Church is an excellent community partner and takes an active role in encouraging civic engagement and social justice, both locally and beyond.”*
- *“It is a piece of the core of our community that offers faith, love, and guidance. Its arms are encompassing and its blessings many.”*
- *“The Union University Church has come to represent not only piety, but civic-mindedness and inclusion. By inclusion, I mean a willingness to embrace all of us, of different colors and faiths and ethnicities.”*