

About Unitarian Coastal Fellowship

Contact Methods

Website: <https://www.ucfnc.org>

Meeting Address

Same as mailing address

Mailing Address

2900 Bridges Street
Morehead City, NC 28557-0425

This Congregation **does not have** a 501(c)(3) status of its own

Congregation Life

Describe your Congregation and its culture:

Unitarian Coastal Fellowship is looking for a contract minister who will hopefully decide to continue as part of our family and become our settled minister in one of the most beautiful places on the Eastern seaboard.

UCF is a close-knit congregation of 85 members and 71 friends, most of whom are of retirement age, though increasingly younger people and families attend regularly. Most consider our congregation their extended family. This family spirit, and the loving generosity of our congregation, led us on the journey to recently complete our beautiful new sanctuary and fellowship hall with no remaining debt except a small loan we owe ourselves. More about this later.....

We have a “can do” spirit. Outreach and commitment beyond our walls are much greater than our small numbers might suggest. We are deeply involved in the larger community through the following actions, and many others: UCF is a Welcoming Congregation, actively advocating for LGBTQ+ justice, and a certified Green Sanctuary tirelessly supporting environmental issues in our beautiful, but ecologically fragile, area. Our very active committees include Social Justice, Green Sanctuary, Worship, Membership, Facilities, Finance, Adult Spiritual Education, Children’s Spiritual Exploration, and the Committee on Ministry. UCF’s Pastoral Care team consists of five lay members plus our minister.

Ours is an incredibly generous congregation. When a hurricane comes and neighbors are hurting, a pandemic arrives and people are hungry, or someone can’t afford to celebrate holidays, we give from our hearts to help. In more normal times we

participate in and support many community organizations described more fully in the “Living Our Values” section below.

Throughout the pandemic we managed to stay close and continue our generosity through weekly Zoom services and a multitude of weekly on-line meetings. With the return to in-person Sunday services and committee meetings we continued to offer virtual attendance options, particularly benefiting those in our Fellowship with health or family challenges. We understand the importance of communication. Each week our Office Assistant sends email updates containing news of upcoming events, announcements, and the link to our Sunday services.

Current challenges include the decrease in membership from following the departure of our long-term minister and the Covid-19 pandemic; burnout of some highly committed long-term members and friends who have served in a series of demanding volunteer positions, particularly in construction the new facility; adapting to combination of in-person and Zoom services; and reconstituting our children’s program to meet the needs of a recent influx of younger families. Despite these hurdles, we continue to grow and commit to a new future.

We are in the process of rebuilding our small-group ministry programs that suffered challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic. Currently we have two such structures:

1. “Thoughtful Gatherings” are groups of 8-12 people who gather, usually in someone’s home, to discuss spiritual topics in a structured format. These very popular events were difficult to maintain over Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic, but are in the process of renewal.
2. “UU101” introduces potential new members to the tenets of Unitarian Universalism as well as to the Unitarian Coastal Fellowship. This program is offered following two consecutive Sunday services with a luncheon followed by a discussion. Childcare is available. Although UU 101 has adopted various forms over the years, it has been very successful in explaining our faith. We encourage our new minister to continue this program in a way that best suits their style and personality.

With the opening of our new campus we added and/or renewed other programs:

“First Sunday Fun Days” is a new series of cross-generational activities held prior to the first service each month. So far it’s been a hit, bringing younger families together with our more mature members.

Friday games night, a monthly social justice film series (open to the community), biweekly vespers, and regular choir rehearsals have started once again.

UCF is a strong congregation at an inflection point. This is fertile ground for our new minister to evolve this proud Fellowship – blending those who have been here from the beginning with the many new faces who’ve recently arrived to meet the spiritual needs of our congregants while continuing to serve our community.

Building Our New Campus:

Our congregation has shown unwavering support, both with votes and pocketbooks, in supporting the decision to follow our dreams to create and furnish our beautiful new campus.

In May 2022 we held the first indoor service following the pandemic, blessing and dedicating our beautiful new sanctuary and fellowship hall, culminating five years of dreams, planning, collaboration, and compromise. This incredible project was completed with no outstanding external financial obligation due to the incredible generosity of UCF members and friends.

Two examples from this project illustrate our congregational culture:

- Our New Building Team (NBT), elected by the congregation, was charged with creating a campus that included everything we needed to fulfill our hopes and dreams for the future for a cost we could afford. This huge contribution of time and effort required the overwhelming trust and support of the congregation and a close working relationship with our general contractor, Smithson Builders, to create our new church home.
- Our two capital campaign leaders set ambitious goals and recruited broadly representative teams that worked diligently to raise over \$1.1 million to completely fund the project, resulting in no external debt other than the obligation to repay \$125,000 to the UCF endowment fund in accordance with our bylaws.

Additional details about this process are found after the “Founding History” section below.

Your Congregation's mission:

Below is our congregation’s Vision Statement, followed by our Mission Statement. Both were written by a committee in 2013 and were adopted by congregational vote that same year. We are aware that, though it expresses what we see as our mission, our Mission Statement is too long and we plan to review and revise it as part of the Strategic Planning process that is going on now.

VISION STATEMENT

Our congregation's vision is to be a visible presence in the community, growing a just world through spiritual enrichment, compassionate action, and free religious inquiry.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Unitarian Coastal Fellowship is a religious community that nurtures the spiritual and intellectual journeys of its members, friends, and visitors. We do this by:

- Providing an environment of acceptance, caring, and trust
- Offering diverse opportunities for religious education and social outreach for all ages
- Engaging in small group ministry where a sharing of life experiences and religious aspirations are encouraged in a supportive setting
- Showing grace and humanity to each other, to all those who enter our church, and to all those who seek our help

By working and celebrating and covenanting together, we build a community which has the power and commitment to transform ourselves and our world. We do this by:

- Participating in weekly religious services exploring our shared humanity and the possibilities for a better society
- Fostering mutual trust through communal activities and right relationships, covenanted in respect
- Providing leadership opportunities to explore our shared aspirations and work toward their fulfillment
- Cultivating our gifts and talents through practicing shared ministry
- Using technology to improve communication within our congregation and with the larger world

To realize our vision, we engage the larger society and invite the wider world to share in our goal of universal social justice. We do this by:

- Being an inclusive and welcoming congregation that is enriched by the diverse religious backgrounds and life experiences of all of its members and friends

- Reaching out to the larger society to partner in action to better the lives and future of others
- Improving our facilities and making them available to the local community in support of shared goals
- Proclaiming our Unitarian Universalist faith whenever opportunities arise

Describe and provide examples of how your Congregation lives its values:

Our congregation's values include transparency, congregational polity, volunteerism, generosity, justice, harmony with the earth, hope for the future, democratic principles, community, being together, open-mindedness, and community service – to name a few. Our Fellowship strongly lives our Unitarian Universalist values both individually and as a congregation. UCF members are deeply involved in many community organizations and causes. We give our time and money, striving to be an example in the community of inclusivity, compassion, and generosity. We also make every effort to partner with local organizations to achieve shared goals. Here are just a few examples:

- We are a Support Church for Family Promise, a local program for unhoused families. We provide money for operational expenses, as well to feed the guests for a week four times a year. Several people from UCF provide numerous volunteer hours at Family Promise.
- We collect and deliver food to local food pantries. Additionally, we include funds in our annual budget to purchase produce from local farmers in season and one of our members delivers it to Martha's Mission, a local food bank.
- Our extremely active Green Sanctuary Committee partners with the local Sierra Club and Interfaith Power and Light to provide programs on climate change, recycling, and sustainable food. These activities continued on Zoom during the pandemic.
- For over 25 years, UCF members and friends have set up and served lunch to 200-300 people at the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration. Several members serve on the planning committee for this event.
- In our commitment to learn and grow in reducing and eliminating white supremacy and systemic racism, the Social Justice, Green Sanctuary, and Adult Spiritual Enrichment Committees partnered to present a flexible book club which has read and discussed more than 20 books on these topics, from Kendi to Wilkerson, over a three-year period. All these books are available for checkout in our library. We have also shown and discussed the movie "I am not your Negro" on two occasions. In the spring of 2023 the book club was followed by a series of three congregational

discussions around short movies on the topic of racism and the 8th Principle. Our Fellowship voted unanimously in favor of the 8th Principle at our Annual Meeting in June 2023.

- Historically, in months with five Sundays, the Social Justice Committee selected an organization or cause (usually local) to receive a special collection. During the 2022-23 church year, UCF raised \$7,000 during the four months with five Sundays:

July 2022 – Carolina Abortion Fund – serves North and South Carolina and operates a confidential, toll-free helpline that provides financial, practical, and emotional support for access to abortion care. \$2,500

October 2022 – Holiday giving to Project Christmas Cheer that provides presents for children, and local programs for adults with addiction or severe and persistent mental illness as well as those who are homeless. \$2,035

January 2023 – Family Promise – program for unhoused families. \$1,416.01

April 2023 – Coastal Carolina Riverwatch – a women-led grassroots organization driven by the voices of the coast and working through community collaboration to protect water quality and coastal habitat. \$1,052.71

In May 2023 this program was expanded to “Share the Plate” donating half of all non-pledge donations every Sunday to a different community group, allowing UCF to reach more organizations in need.

- UCF continues our strong relationship with the UU Justice Ministry of North Carolina as a Justice Partner. We attend regional and state meetings whenever possible. Weekly, the Social Justice committee sends UCF members and friends UUJMNC opportunities for action.

- Numerous UCF members and friends actively work to protect and advance voter rights. Examples include:

- Attending Board of Elections meetings
- Holding Voter Registration drives
- Phone banking and participating in UU the Vote
- Partnering with the League of Women voters to hold voter registration drives at the local community college.

- Hosting a screening of “Suppressed: The Fight to Vote” a documentary that chronicles Stacey Abrams’ 2018 gubernatorial run in Georgia.
- Mailing 2800 postcards, written by sixty-one UCF members and friends in 2020, to voters of color encouraging them to vote and to check their registrations.
- Writing and mailing 980 “get out the vote” postcards in 2022.
- In 2019, just before the pandemic, the Green Sanctuary and Social Justice Committees planned to hold a “Day of Service” every month for UCF members and friends to provide labor for local organizations for a day. Besides providing needed services and being seen in the community, this would have been a bonding experience for our members and friends. Due to the pandemic, the planned Days of Service were canceled. Recently, we began volunteering to serve meals at Hope Mission, a Morehead City nonprofit, providing food, shelter, and other means of support to the homeless and those on the edge.
- Individual members and friends volunteer in our community every day.

Several examples are:

- Case management for Carteret Long Term Recovery Alliance
- Navigators for the Affordable Care Act
- Volunteers at the local free clinic
- Volunteers in local environmental organizations
- Members of the Carteret County Branch of the NAACP
- Members of Carteret County Citizens for Diversity in Education
- Our Social Justice Committee applied to the UUA for a Disaster Relief grant after Hurricane Florence devastated our area. In May 2019, UCF received a \$50,000 grant, which was given to the Carteret Long Term Recovery Alliance (CLTRA) to help with unmet needs of people in our county still affected by the hurricane. In 2020, we applied for and received a second grant from UUA to care for the many people still struggling with food and housing insecurity. This generous \$5,000 grant was split between the Food Bank of Eastern and Central NC and CLTRA.
- Beginning in 2022, UCF began hosting regular Red Cross blood drives at our campus.

- For many years UCF has provided financial support through Sister Communities of San Ramon, Nicaragua, for the community school, and several members have visited.
- The annual Social Justice budget includes monetary donations to local animal protection groups, domestic violence centers, hospice, the Broad Street Clinic (free medical services to needy adults), Family Promise, numerous environmental groups, and LGBTQ+ advocacy/support programs.
- UCF's new campus uses 100% renewable energy and we have two electric vehicle charging stations. UCF applied for and received \$8000 in grant support from the North Carolina Division of Environmental Quality for the charging stations with additional funding for installation included in construction costs. The stations are used by attendees at our Sunday services and during the week receive regular visitors from the general public.

These are just a few examples of the many community partnerships we have developed and the work we have done to share our values.

Link to your Safe Congregation policy:

We do not have a Safe Congregation policy at this time.

Worship service schedule:

Worship services are held at 10:30 Sunday mornings. All services are streamed live on Zoom. Child care is provided during in-person worship services.

SAFETY - The section above does not provide ample space to describe current efforts to increase safety in several areas. The Board of Trustees serves as the Safety Committee. UCF has several written safety policies found in the the UCF Policy Manual, Part 2:

- Constructive Communication policy that covers disruptive behavior (needs revision).
- COVID policy (currently being revised),
- Natural Disaster Policy.

Additionally current efforts are underway in the following areas:

Physical Safety: Recent mass shootings, particularly in houses of worship and facilities supporting LGBTQ+ rights is extremely concerning. We commenced steps to deter

potential aggressors immediately upon occupancy of our new facility. These measures are being studied and updated. A formal safety policy will be written and included in the UCF Policy Manual when details of these and other efforts have matured

- Doors are locked in the sanctuary and annex during services. Greeters are stationed to allow latecomers entrance and to call 911 if assistance is deemed necessary.

- Four UCF members have attended de-escalation training with others to follow, focusing on those serving as greeters.

- Planned purchase of at least one automated external defibrillator (AED) and numerous Stop the Bleed kits.

- UCF membership includes several who are medically trained including one retired physician, one active physician assistant, several retired nurses, respiratory therapists and other medical technicians willing to provide emergency response if needed.

Fire Safety:A fire safety policy is in draft. We held our first fire drill in November 2023 safely evacuating the buildings and gathering in the Salvation Army parking lot across the street with all attendees accounted for.

- Fire alarm systems required by building code are installed and are in working condition.

Digital Safety:

- Five UCF members will attend a UUA Digital Safety workshop in January 2024.

- Our order of service contains a statement that only UCF authorized photography and recording is allowed during events on our campus.

- UCF Sunday services are carried live via Zoom, however, the link is contained only in email attachments to members and friends.

Future Plans:

- Child/youth safety procedures.

- Procedures for dealing with intruders/disrupters both in-person and on-line.

- Combining all safety procedures in a common space within the UCF Policy Manual.

Personnel

Name	Position	Paid Hours per Week	Year Started
Susan Fetzer	President/Chair		2022
Joan Burton	Treasurer		2023
Thomas Wentworth	Vice President/Chair		2022
Tom Cullison	Music Director	Volunteer	2018
Meganne Smith	Pianist	10	2019
Micah Ma	Interim Minister		2021
Joan Burton	Treasurer	Volunteer	2923
Linda Rudd	Leadership Council Trustee	Volunteer	2022
Rebecka Keeter	Office Assistant	13	2023
Miriam Green	Board Secretary	Volunteer	2023
In Hiring Process	Children's Religious Educator	10	2024
Susan Roberts	Board Secretary	Volunteer	2023

Congregation History

Provide your Congregation's founding history:

Riley Stone placed a classified ad in the Carteret News-Times in February 1980. “If you are a Unitarian and would like to form a local society, please phone [Riley’s number]. Eight months later twenty people, calling themselves the Unitarian Coastal Fellowship, applied for membership in the Unitarian Universalist Association (the UUA). Ben Wade was president, Susan Fetzer was secretary, and Wilma Reusch was treasurer. The group planned to meet once a month, for discussion and socializing, at 7:30 on a Sunday evening at the Webb Library in Morehead City. The application was approved by the UUA board at its October meeting.

From the beginning, growth and stability were guiding concerns. By 1985, the services had been moved to Sunday mornings, to attract young families with children. The Fellowship began meeting at the Galley Stack Restaurant, owned by the Fetzer family. The budget was steadily expanded, with the goal of accumulating a contingency fund “toward the day when we might own our own church home and/or obtain a minister who could provide professional leadership.”

For UCF, a minister was essential “to enhance the religious program and foster additional growth.” In a process that took three years, the Fellowship joined with other small Fellowships in Greenville and Fayetteville to share the services of the Rev.

Cynthia Edson, who called herself “a circuit-riding minister.” For three years, from 1988 through 1990, she led one service per month at UCF.

The Galley Stack was a good place to meet, but the conviction grew that with a home of its own, the Fellowship would really grow. In 1990, twenty-one UCF members formed a Partnership for the purpose of buying “real property” to be resold to the Fellowship. Each partner pledged a minimum of \$500, which the group could mobilize in short order if a suitable property was found. An offer to buy a house on Country Club Road fell through; a lot on route 24 didn’t work out, but in September 1992, the Building Committee had identified three possible sites for a church home. One was an existing small church in Morehead City.

In October, the Partnership purchased the building for \$87,000. The congregation launched a Capital Fund Drive to raise the money to buy it from the Partnership. Some pledged money; some gave money outright. The Partners loaned the balance to the Fellowship, but by January 1996, the Fellowship had paid the Partnership in full. In a Sunday service on January 28, Susan Fetzer burned a copy of the Partnership agreement (in the process setting off all the smoke alarms in the building). She led the congregation in reading together, as they dedicated this building that that became the Fellowship’s home. Nine more ministers have followed the Rev. Cynthia Edson. Retired ministers. Part-time ministers. Ministers shared with other congregations. Nine times in twenty-three years, the congregation committed time, energy, and money to the search for professional ministerial leadership; searched its own soul and searched the country for someone to partner with them in the work of ministry and in leadership for spiritual growth. In 2002, UCF took a huge leap of faith and undertook to call a full-time minister, with all the financial and organizational demands that come with full-time ministry.

In 2003, we called Reverend Sally White to full-time ministry. During our eighteen years together, our partnership grew rich in blessing and challenge. Our worship, our groups, our programs, our governance, our social outreach, our mission, our vision, our shared ministry, our visibility and influence in the community – all grew in depth, in breadth, in focus. The blessing and the challenge of ministry is a theme in the life of this Fellowship.

Reverend Sally retired in 2021. Our Interim minister search committee interviewed multiple excellent candidates and recommended Reverend Micah Ma who began their service during the final year of Zoom only services. They have led us through the transition both from a longstanding relationship with a beloved minister and into a beautiful new physical environment. During their last year with us we have begun the search process for the next ministerial leader of this vibrant Fellowship.

Due to the multitude of changes and stresses from the Covid pandemic, constructing and moving into and adjusting to a new campus, and returning to in-person services, it was agreed that adding the challenge of a ministerial search would not be healthy for the Fellowship or its individual members and friends. Therefore, with their concurrence, Reverend Ma's contract was extended for a third year to begin the ministerial search in the 2023-24 church year.

Date founded: 10/1/1980

Describe important events in your Congregation's history:

One recent milestone deserves special mention – the creation of our new campus at 2900 Bridges Street.

The healing grace of home is also a theme in the life of this Fellowship. As UCF expanded, we realized we needed increased, more efficient space to take the next step in our growth both in breadth, and perhaps in numbers. Exploratory work toward our new campus began in 2017 following a discussion led by the Committee on Ministry reviewing the past year and exploring the limitations to achieving our vision. In May 2022 we held the first indoor service following the pandemic – the blessing of our beautiful new sanctuary and fellowship hall – culminating five years of dreams, planning, collaboration, and compromise.

About 5 years ago the Committee on Ministry annual assessment of our congregational life produced an “aha moment”! We had outgrown our little church building in downtown Morehead City. To meet our vision – “being a visible presence in the community, growing a just world through spiritual enrichment, compassionate action, and free religious inquiry” – we needed more space.

Numerous congregational discussions – “Coffees with the Board” – were convened after Sunday services to consider the realities of constructing a new facility, including financial requirements, potential locations, architectural style, space utilization, how far people were willing to drive, and many other topics.

We decided to move forward.

This million-dollar project was completed with no outstanding external financial obligation due to the incredible generosity of UCF members and friends. We hired a consultant recommended by the UUA to create a building campaign, which raised over \$438,000. A second campaign, organized by the congregation, raised an additional \$211,000 and a focused fund drive for furnishings brought in \$28,000. These fund

drives, combined with the UCF endowment, sale of our original building, and other funds, provided \$1,120,389.36 to construct and furnish our new campus.

Our initial plan to expand in the original location was wiped out by Hurricane Florence, which destroyed the adjoining building during the due diligence period of our offer to purchase. Regrouping, we located an existing nearby church building that we could possibly purchase with the intention of renovating it to meet our needs. Closer inspection of the facility revealed that extensive damage from Hurricane Florence made this option unwise.

More “Coffees with the Board” were held with many, many hours of discussion, with widely differing opinions presented earnestly, but with mutual respect. In the end, a vote by UCF members, with advisory ballots submitted by friends, resulted in a unanimous decision to purchase, demolish the existing structure, and build anew at 2900 Bridges Street.

We elected a task force of 7 members with diverse backgrounds and talents to search for the right builder, entrusting this team with the authority to speak for the congregation and present a single option for an up or down vote at a congregational meeting. The vote was again unanimous, and our President signed a contract with Smithson Builders to design and construct our amazing new campus.

The task force became the New Building Team representing UCF with our contractor Smithson Builders, the Morehead City Council and planning office, and numerous other entities. This Team met weekly for hours for more than two years, developing a close working relationship with Smithson, evolving the original plan into the beautiful, functional facility we occupied in the spring of 2022 with great fanfare at a ceremony that included the mayor, other city officials, and representatives of other local churches.

We are incredibly proud of the foresight, dedication, perseverance, and love of all involved in this significant accomplishment by our small congregation.

Ministerial History

Start	End	Position	Name	Job Title
2021	Now	Interim	Micah Ma	Interim Minister
2003	2021	Called	Sally White	Minister
2002	2003	Interim	Rudolf Gelsey	Interim Minister
1996	2000	Called	Robert Murphy	Minister
1995	1995	Called	Heather Collins	Minister
1992	1993	Called	Emily Palmer	Minister
1988	1991	Called	Cynthia Edson	Minister

Ministers Emeritus/a

Name	Date Voted Emeritus/a	Year Deceased
Sally White	6/26/2021	

Additional ministerial history notes:

None

Describe any important Lay Leaders:

The Minister is off one Sunday each month. The Worship Committee, currently chaired by Marilyn Cullison, produces and leads services on these days as well as when the minister is on leave. Usually a member of the Worship Committee will lead the liturgy and a UCF member or friend, an outside speaker, or a visiting minister (paid) delivers the message.

Membership & Finances

The data for the table below comes directly from the UUA's annual congregational certification.

Year	Total Pledge Income	Total Operating Expenses	Memberships	Youth Enrollment	Avg. Attendance
2023*	\$100,343	\$127,343	75	12	
2022	\$93,903	\$115,377	89	32	
2021	\$80,957	\$115,242	89	32	
2020	\$87,066	\$105,857	101	32	64
2019	\$78,554	\$105,950	101	22	58
2018	\$75,918	\$109,845	97	18	56
2017	\$77,089	\$93,234	92	22	56
2016	\$76,767	\$95,697	85	20	55
2015	\$78,515	\$94,205	82	20	53
2014	\$76,077	\$96,020	81	20	55

The following notes and/or explanations have been offered by the congregation:

Year Note/Explanation

Ten new members joined in 2023 increasing our current membership to 85.
2023 Several new members are young families bringing our children's program to 14.

Year Note/Explanation

Our 2024 pledge goal is \$138,306. We are currently on track to meet this goal. We have met our budget every year with fundraisers such as an annual auction, participation in local festivals and special collections.

Demographics**What percentage of members do you estimate identify as people of color?**

1-4%

What percentage of members do you estimate identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ)?

5-9%

Please describe the gender makeup of your congregation

Approximately 29% identify as male, 71% identify as female.

What number of staff (including full and part time) identify as people of color?

1

What number of people of color serve as leaders or chairs of your volunteer committees and program teams?

0

What number of your Board of Trustees identify as people of color?

0

What changes have you made in the last 3-5 years, if any, to include the racial and ethnic diversity of your congregational staff and volunteer leadership?

The UCF staff consists of five personnel: minister, office assistant, music director/choir director, pianist and children's religious education director. Volunteer leadership from within the congregation is very active, however, given the racial and ethnic composition of our members and friends, leadership development from within the congregation does little to increase diversity.

Our Fellowship's long history of participation in community musical and social action activities with multiple racial and ethnic participants has established our congregation's

support of diversity. Our interim pianist for two years and several guest ministers represent minority communities. UCF consistently supports annual community events such as the NAACP scholarship program, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday celebration, and the Gospel Fest choir celebration (UCF is the only non African-American church participating).

Adult religious education programs around racial issues attract diverse participants leading to increased visibility and interaction.

Accessibility

Is your Congregation's meeting space wheelchair accessible? Yes

Wheelchair accessibility details:

Our new buildings comply with all Americans with Disability Act (ADA) codes, including wheelchair accessible bathrooms.

Does your Congregation provide assisted listening systems? Yes

Assisted listening system details:

Hearing assistive devices connected to the audio-visual system are available for those attending services. Several attendees routinely take advantage of this.

Describe other ways your congregation has dealt with accessibility:

As we built our new sanctuary and fellowship hall, and occupied our new campus, we worked with our contractors and members of the Fellowship to follow all ADA guidelines throughout our buildings, restrooms, and parking areas to provide a welcoming environment to those with physical challenges. All classrooms and meeting rooms are on the same level as the Fellowship Hall and Sanctuary. In addition to a staffed nursery during services, there is a "quiet room" in the sanctuary. When children are having a tough day and parents still want to listen and observe the service, they can use this peaceful room for quiet play. We understand that some families have special needs, and we welcome the opportunity to work with them in determining our best course of accommodating their needs.

Our hallways are wide and the doorways to classrooms and meeting rooms are painted in a contrasting color to aid those with sight impairment. We have large print hymnals and Orders of Service materials available. We have wheelchair accessible water fountains, and a ramp in the Sanctuary that leads to the stage. Our sound system includes audio enhancement for the hearing impaired. We have installed a monitored

fire alarm system and emergency exit signs to direct everyone safely out of the buildings.

Allergens are everywhere around us. We use odorless candles in our adult and children's worship services, and we also remind congregants to be considerate of others who are sensitive to fragrances and chemicals.

Finally, we are now easier to find than in our former location, being located on a main street, closer and more accessible to neighborhoods with lower income populations, and the two blocks from a day center for adults with learning disabilities. Across the street from us is a new Salvation Army store and Worship Center. The Salvation Army is proving to be an excellent neighbor, allowing us extra parking space during worship services, and opportunities to work together staffing their emergency kitchen.

Resources & Programs

List the resources and programs your Congregation used or participated in during the past year:

- Welcoming Congregation – We certified in 2006 and renewed in 2022. The Welcoming Congregation Team is a subcommittee of Social Justice and successfully met and exceeded the renewal requirements. UCF hosted, and twenty-one members participated in, the six sessions from the Transforming Hearts Collective – Transgender Inclusion in Congregations. The Welcoming Congregation Team provided the congregation with information about the Progress Flag as well as the importance of displaying this flag in our community, an area where there are few visual symbols of support for the LGBTQ+ community. The Progress flag is proudly hanging over the doors to our sanctuary and will soon be displayed outside when a flagpole is installed. UCF will continue annual recertification as a Welcoming Congregation.
- Green Sanctuary – certified in 2015. We have an active Green Sanctuary committee dedicated to preserving our earth, providing opportunities for our congregants to enjoy the outdoors, and keeping our facilities as green as possible. They have contributed to the planning for our new campus and will continue to do so.
- Regional UU Choir Festivals – These are held every 1 ½ years at larger UU congregations in Eastern North Carolina. Our choir has participated in almost all festivals since they started.
- UU Justice Ministry of NC (UUJMNC) – Our congregation was the first church in NC to become a “partner” with UUJMNC and pledge a yearly donation to the organization. We also participate in their weekly “Action Opportunities” via email and leverage the many partnerships to advance our social justice work.

- Southern Region Leadership Experience – We have consistently budgeted for and sent members of our congregation to this program. Ten members of our congregation attended this training during the fall of 2020 and winter of 2021. These people have then gone on to become members of the Board or Leadership Council.
- General Assembly – We budget every year to send two voting members (in addition to the minister who attends using professional development funds) to the General Assembly.
- Association of UU Ministries of Music (AUUMM) – we budget to send one to two people to this annual event.

Describe your religious educational programs:

Adult Religious Education:

Our Adult Spiritual Enrichment Committee presents programs designed to motivate and encourage spiritual, intellectual, social justice, or practical transformation in the lives of our members, our friends, and the community. Some examples of classes that have been offered in recent years include: Spirit of Life (a study of different spiritual practices); Resistance and Transformation (the history of UU involvement in social justice work); a book study of The Third Reconstruction by Rev. William Barber, and a WICCA class. In the last three years, a fluctuating group has been meeting monthly to read and discuss books on anti-racism and white supremacy.

A monthly film series is starting this year to learn more and discuss various social justice areas. These will be open to the community.

Classes may come from UUA or other published curricula, an outside speaker, or a member of our congregation who has special knowledge in the field. They may be presented as a series or as a one-time offering and usually are open to the wider community.

Several interest groups have met regularly, such as our Book Group, Anti-Racism Reading Group, Meditation Group, Gentle Yoga Class, Mental Health Family Support Group, and Women's Discussion Group, although not all continue on a regular basis.

Children's Spiritual Exploration:

While our Children's Spiritual Exploration program is currently in flux, the congregation is committed to growing our children's program and loves hearing the sounds of little ones in activities and services. As with many other churches across the country, the pandemic posed significant challenges for our Children's Spiritual Exploration program.

This was compounded by our new building construction that prevented us from gathering in person until 2022.

Encouragingly recent new member families have increased the number of children in our program.

While challenging, this has given UCF opportunities to begin afresh and evolve our Children's Spiritual Exploration program. In addition to frequent multigenerational services, every Sunday service features a "Time for All Ages."

Monthly First Sunday Fundays are multigenerational gatherings at 9:00 am for fun activities, usually involving food.

Some recent examples:

- Making pancakes and waffles, with the help of some adults, and serving attendees
- Learning how to make Rice Krispies treats, mini zucchini pizzas, muddy buddies and ants on a log
- Making "get well soon" and "thinking of you" cards
- Making and smashing pinatas.

UCF's community outreach specifically extends to children. Annually, we provide holiday gifts for families, generally with children, through Project Christmas Cheer. We held an end of the school year pizza and ice cream party, and we provide support for Family Promise, a local program for unhoused families.

The UCF Religious Education (RE) Committee is currently exploring options for curricula that we can use in a "one-room schoolhouse" setting as children's attendance is inconsistent, varying from one to six younger children with a variety of ages. The RE Committee is considering Spirit Play. Also, UCF also has teenagers who do not attend Sunday services but may be interested in service projects, field trips, or other youth activities.

Our Children's Spiritual Exploration program has one enthusiastic Nursery staff person and at the time of writing we are actively searching for a Children & Family Ministries Assistant.

Describe your youth and campus ministry programs:

N/A

Surrounding Community

Describe the character of the surrounding community, including population and demographics:

Our area is known, as the “Crystal Coast,” consisting of small towns that originated as fishing and farming villages: Morehead City, Beaufort, Newport, Harkers Island and other “Down East” towns; Bogue Banks (the “Island”) which includes Atlantic Beach, Pine Knoll Shores, Salter Path, and Emerald Isle; and Swansboro in neighboring Onslow County.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByTE-UeBxlc>

<https://crystalcoast.org>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByTE-UeBxlc>

The local industries still include commercial and recreational fisheries, boat building, and farming, but now depend heavily on tourism and hospitality. Morehead City is also one of two North Carolina port cities that receive commercial freighters from all over the world and U.S. Navy vessels. Beaufort Inlet can be a very busy waterway, especially on a weekend!

Most of our fellowship live in Carteret County, however we also draw from those living in nearby Onslow and Craven Counties, as well as visiting vacationers from all over the world. Carteret County’s population is about 70,000 people. This area is politically conservative. Our neighbors are friendly, caring, and generally welcoming to those of us who have moved here recently. The general demographics are White 86%, Black or African American 6.7%, Latino or Hispanic 4.4% and other 3%. Twenty-one percent are under 18 and 27% 65 or older. Our congregation draws UUs who retire to our area, and also attracts young military families during their assignments to two large military establishments nearby. Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point are home to about 125,000 active-duty Marines, sailors, Coast Guardsmen, and family members.

We love living near the water! Many of our members fish, sail, surf, kayak, paddleboard and, of course, care deeply about the ecology of our coastline. This is a wonderful area for outdoor activities, biking, and hiking. We even have a 90ish year-old UU couple who bike 20+ miles three times a week. It is also a great area for those interested in

history, photography, birdwatching, marine biology, and seafood. Although we are a coastal resort area, we are not overbuilt because much of the area is either National Seashore (Cape Lookout and the Southern Outer Banks), or state parks such as Fort Macon and Hammocks Beach. We have beautiful clean beaches, lots of great restaurants, and we are only a day trip by ferry away from Ocracoke Island. As beach towns go, this is a remarkably inexpensive area in which to live.

We are the home of the NC Maritime Museum (Blackbeard's flag ship, the Queen Anne's Revenge exhibit), Fort Macon Civil War Museum and Fort, and the NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores. Morehead City hosts the NC Seafood Festival each October, and the Big Rock blue marlin Tournament each spring. Beaufort hosts the annual Pirate Invasion in August and a wonderful Saturday morning farmers' and artists' market under the live oaks on the County Courthouse grounds from early spring until late fall. In addition to Carteret Community College, we are a center for marine science expertise second only to Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute as home to the Duke University Marine Laboratory and NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science Laboratory in Beaufort, and the University of North Carolina Institute of Marine Sciences and North Carolina State Center for Marine Sciences and Technology (CMAST) in Morehead City.

Describe how your Congregation is known/perceived by the larger community:

We are active and vocal in supporting environmental issues, green energy usage, voting rights protection, and are known for supporting local food banks, organizations that provide medical/mental health clinics, and temporary housing for families and individuals in need. Our new campus features two charging stations for electric vehicles, which has brought several newcomers to our doorsteps. We partner with African American congregations in supporting scholarships for local students and enjoy singing with those congregations in Gospel Fests. A number of our congregation are members of and support the local NAACP chapter in all its local and state initiatives and in increasing awareness of attracting diversity in hiring in our county school district. Before the pandemic intervened, our church provided a meeting location for progressive groups such as the local Indivisible and Sierra Club chapters, and we held vigils after the Pulse Nightclub shooting and the Charlottesville Rally.

UCF is known in our community as an advocate for LGBTQ+ rights, serving as spiritual home for LGBTQ+ citizens in this politically conservative community since our founding. We have certified and renewed as a Welcoming Congregation, live the tenets of this important UUA program each day, and visibly express our support of equality by displaying the Progress flag. More importantly, we do so by maintaining a consistent environment of acceptance, trust, and respect. Several examples include:

- Following the “Statement of Conscience” process in our Bylaws, UCF held numerous discussions regarding the North Carolina “Bathroom Bill.” UCF publicly opposed this restrictive legislation attacking the trans community.
- UCF was called to advocate when some of the churches who were hosting families for Family Promise of Carteret County (a program for homeless families) refused to take families with same sex parents. After a meeting to discuss how we could intervene should this situation arise, we offered to house any such families that were admitted to the program at our church, as well as voicing our strong disagreement with the discrimination that was being demonstrated to these families.
- Annually, UCF participates in “Pride in the Park,” which is hosted by Crystal Coast Proud, a nonprofit organization with the mission to spread the message of equality and inclusion through outreach, events, and community support.
- In June 2023, we held a vigil for LGBTQ+ rights to acknowledge the onslaught of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and to demonstrate to the community UCF’s unwavering support of the LGBTQ+ community. Community members as well as UCF members attended the vigil.
- UCF is demonstrating unqualified support of our interim minister during their medical/social transition. Our Fellowship requested them to serve a third year of interim ministry as we settle into our new facility, renew in-person services, and focus on ministerial search.
- A member of our congregation recently stated publicly, “I joined UCF because this is one of the two places I feel safe and supported in this area.”

Describe your Congregation's religious, political, and social context from a historical and current perspective.

We do watch the weather forecasts for storms during hurricane season, and have weathered a few major storms in the last several years. We are grateful that NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency) is located here also and is able to give us plenty of information to prepare. We come together afterwards to help each other and our neighbors if cleanup, food, water or money is needed. Our congregation made numerous personal donations and also obtained a grant from the UUA after Hurricane Florence (2018) for \$50,000 for the Carteret Long Term Recovery Alliance (CLTRA). In 2020, after Hurricane Dorian, we applied again and received an additional \$5000 from the UUA which was donated to local food banks and to the CLTRA.

This is a scenic playground of beaches and sounds that attract families to vacation here. Summer is busy, but the pleasantly long spring and fall weather allow us to enjoy

our surroundings, the migration of birds, fish and whales, and explore the Croatan Forest. We are grateful for this priceless gift of nature and zealously guard it with action when necessary. We continue to fight against offshore seismic testing and drilling as a danger to our shoreline and our aquifer, as well as the precious marine life that pass by on migration.

Our Worship committee sees that services are varied, and we are glad to have religious and lay leaders from local/regional groups talk to us about their religious, cultural, and social action goals. We welcome diversity among our friends and members, but there are many churches in the area, and among the strongest and tightest knit congregations are the African American churches, who have members belonging for many years. We join with them for Gospel Festivals, and celebrating Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr's birthday, and are in close touch with events held by the local NAACP.

Of course, like all UU fellowships, one of our favorite things to do is get together for pot luck dinners and picnics at local parks. We especially enjoy Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas Dinner, Easter Dinner, and the occasional Meatless Monday Dinner. Pat Harms' coconut macaroon cookies are not to be missed!

Position Basics

Anticipated Start Date: August 2024

Term: One year with the option to renew (open to contract-to-call)

Percent Time: 100% Time

Minimum Salary + Housing: \$60,000

Benefits: Self-employment offset tax; Retirement Plan; UUA Health Plan; Other Health Plan; Disability Coverage; Term Life Insurance; Dental; Professional Expense Allowance

Questionnaire

Description of minister's role in relation to other paid staff

Minister supervises Religious Education Director, Music Director/Pianist and Office Assistant.

Primary areas of focus for the minister

We are actively working and making progress in several important areas. Extra attention by our new minister will help ensure success:

-Children's Religious Exploration. We want to grow a multigenerational congregation. A new group of children from newborn to teens has recently injected energy and enthusiasm into our midst – a treasure. Following the departure of our children's RE director early in 2023 (prior to the arrival of most new youngsters) UCF generated a new lay-led committee and provided additional resources to restart this key program using something like Spirit Play. We have the desire and means, but need professional guidance to be sure we stay on track and expand in an appropriate way.

-Managing Growth. We want to share our wonderful spiritual home with others in our community. The dedicated older members who have built and sustained UCF for many years must pass the torch to the next generation in a way that provides for both continuity and adaptation. We need to anticipate the reduction in our senior membership with a likely corresponding decrease in individual financial contributions. Fortunately, several younger families have recently joined. It is vital that this trend continue and new, younger leadership accepts responsibility for sustaining and growing our Fellowship.

-Leadership Development. We need to identify, nurture and groom potential new leaders to prevent vacancies and avoid burnout. The additional work and stress associated with on-line services during Covid and building the new campus simply exhausted many of our long-time dedicated leaders. For example, we have a vacancy in the key leadership position in our Membership Committee. UCF has a long history of supporting members to attend UUA leadership fora, but this process can be better organized and formalized ensuring that those who attend will serve the Fellowship in critical positions.

-Small Group Ministry. Our attempt to restart our small group ministry program, "Thoughtful Gatherings", fell flat. Prior to Covid, this was a very successful program of several 8-10 person groups gathering bimonthly or quarterly in each other's homes to discuss spiritual topics based on a guided syllabus. Although many have desired to resume this activity, it just has not happened.

More details can be found in the Cottage Meeting Summary in the documents file contained in the GoogleDocs link we will provide. These meetings answered the questions "looking back after our new minister has been here for a year, what will be your measure of success?" and "What will make you say you are glad the new minister is among us?"

Traditional holiday services celebrated outside of Sunday morning

Christmas Eve Service.

Status of the congregation as a Welcoming Congregation

UCF was certified as a Welcoming Congregation in 2006 and received renewal status in 2022. We have a Welcoming Congregation team that is a subcommittee of Social Justice and this team will apply for Welcoming Congregation renewal annually.

Status of the congregation as a Green Sanctuary congregation

Our "Green Team" was formed under Reverend Murphy's tenure as our minister in 1998. After meeting on a regular schedule and doing service, outreach, and educational projects monthly for several years we applied for and were certified as a Green Sanctuary on April 23, 2015, just in time for an Earth Day celebration! We are currently working on Re-certification as a Green Sanctuary Church following the move into our new church home.

Status of the congregation as an Honor Congregation

No.

How the congregation defines good preaching and worship

As stated in our vision, UCF strives to maintain a balance between spirituality and social justice, realizing that often, but not always, the two overlap. UCF enjoys variety in preaching and worship including spiritual, social justice and intellectual topics.

How has your ministry changed since COVID began? Where do you see decline? What have you let go of? Where do you see fresh energy?

We have seen a decline in our membership due to effects of the pandemic and a reduction in the sense of community and family. We are working hard to rebuild that sense of community and are greatly encouraged by the number of new people, younger people, and families that are attending our services and participating in our programs.

Have you passed the Eighth Principle, or is the congregation in process of moving to a congregational vote?

The Congregation voted unanimously in favor of the 8th Principle at our June 2023 annual meeting following much preparatory work.

UCF formed an anti-racism reading group (fondly called ARRG) in 2018 comprised of both UCF congregants and external community members. Beginning with Rev. Dr. William Barber's, *The Third Reconstruction*, ARRG has studied and discussed more than 20 books, both fiction and nonfiction, all available in the UCF library.

A more formal Racial Justice Group, formed in 2022, began a year-long study of Article II of the 8th Principle for the purpose of sharing information about how UUA is addressing systemic racism in our society, through movies, further readings, and structured discussions.

How did the last ministry end (or how is it ending)? How is the congregation doing with this time of transition?

Our previous settled minister, Reverend Sally White, served this congregation with unfailing dedication, care, and respect for 18 years. She was beloved by all fortunate to meet, know, and work with her. At her retirement in 2021, our Fellowship Hall was dedicated as the Reverend Sally B. White Center, memorialized with the sign outside the building and beneath her framed photograph in the entryway.

By mutual agreement Reverend Micah Ma is serving a third year as interim minister. Two major concurrent events – completion, dedication and moving into the new sanctuary, and transition from Zoom to in person services – required extraordinary efforts by many traditional UCF lay leaders who, quite frankly, were overextended and tired. Many who would serve on the search committee were heavily involved with these transitions and would be unable to provide the dedication of time and attention required for the search process. The congregation is now ready and excited to move ahead with search.

How is technology currently used in your congregation and what are the expectations of the minister around that?

All Sunday Services are streamed live via Zoom.

Our web page, interactive on-line calendar and membership rosters are maintained by volunteer staff.

The minister is expected to provide input to the monthly newsletter "The Coastline" and weekly email updates.

Facility with web-based capabilities such as GoogleDocs, Microsoft programs such as Word and PowerPoint is expected.



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