

# A STATISTICAL PROFILE

WITH REFLECTION/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERS

RESEARCH FROM THE UCC CENTER FOR ANALYTICS, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT, AND DATA (CARD D)



# 2024



# QUICK SUMMARY OF UCC STATISTICS

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## MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

CONGREGATIONS: 4,485

MEMBERS: 683,936

AVERAGE MEMBERSHIP: 154\*

MEDIAN MEMBERSHIP: 97

AVERAGE IN-PERSON WORSHIP ATTENDANCE: 53

MEDIAN IN-PERSON WORSHIP ATTENDANCE: 39

AVERAGE CONFIRMATIONS: 1.1

AVERAGE CONFESSIONS: 1.4

AVERAGE TRANSFERS IN: 1.9

AVERAGE REAFFIRMATIONS: 1.7

AVERAGE DEATHS: 3.7

AVERAGE TRANSFERS OUT: 1.3

AVERAGE CHILD BAPTISMS: 1.4

AVERAGE ADULT BAPTISMS: 0.4

OPEN AND AFFIRMING: 37.6%

ACCESSIBLE: 87.4%

WEB PRESENCE: 72.0%

## RACE/ETHNICITY BY CONGREGATION

WHITE/EURO-AMERICAN: 82.7%

AFRICAN AMERICAN: 4.9%

ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER: 3.9%

HISPANIC/LATINO(A): 0.2%

NATIVE AMERICAN: 0.6%

BIRACIAL/MULTIRACIAL: 7.1%

OTHER: 0.6%

## STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCES

AVERAGE BASIC SUPPORT: \$3,849

AVERAGE OTHER UCC GIVING: \$2,258

AVERAGE TOTAL OCWM: \$6,107

AVERAGE ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING: \$338

AVERAGE NEIGHBORS IN NEED: \$202

AVERAGE CHRISTMAS FUND: \$248

AVERAGE STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH: \$111

5 FOR 5 CHURCHES: 26.7%

AVERAGE OTHER GIFTS: \$11,610

AVERAGE OPERATING EXPENSES: \$190,350

AVERAGE TOTAL INCOME: \$267,958

*\*Unlike in the Yearbook, this number reflects the average only among churches with reported membership numbers as compared to the average across all churches. As a result, the denominator for this calculation is slightly lower, resulting in a slightly higher average.*

*Note: Calculations of church quick stats have changed since 2019. Previously, the averages were calculated only among churches that reported non-zero numbers of confirmations, confessions, etc. Starting in 2020, calculations include churches that reported a "0" for the averages in order to more closely represent these figures across all churches. Other Gifts, Operating Expenses and Total Income do not include \$0 in the computation of their averages.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	3
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## CONGREGATIONAL STATISTICS

CONGREGATIONS AND MEMBERS .....	4
GROWTH AND DECLINE .....	6
MEMBERSHIP GROWTH AND DECLINE .....	7
CONGREGATIONS BY RACE/ETHNICITY .....	8
CONGREGATIONS BY DATE OF ORGANIZATION .....	9
CONGREGATION SIZE BY MEMBERSHIP .....	10
IN-PERSON WORSHIP ATTENDANCE .....	11
IN-PERSON WORSHIP ATTENDANCE AND MEMBERSHIP .....	12
CONGREGATIONAL DESIGNATIONS .....	13
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION/FAITH FORMATION .....	14
CONGREGATIONAL OUTREACH .....	16
MISSION/IMMERSION/SERVICE TRIPS .....	17

## FINANCIAL STATISTICS

LOCAL CHURCH FINANCIAL TRENDS .....	18
THE CHURCH DOLLAR .....	19
STEWARDSHIP AND MISSION SUPPORT .....	20

## MINISTERIAL STATISTICS

SUMMARY OF UCC AUTHORIZED MINISTERS .....	22
SUMMARY OF UCC ORDAINED MINISTERS .....	23
TRENDS IN ORDAINED MINISTRY OVER TIME .....	24
AUTHORIZED MINISTERS BY AGE .....	25
AUTHORIZED MINISTERS BY RACE/ETHNICITY .....	26
ORDAINED MINISTERS IN LOCAL CHURCHES BY RACE/ETHNICITY .....	27
AUTHORIZED MINISTERS BY GENDER .....	28
ORDAINED MINISTERS IN LOCAL CHURCHES BY GENDER .....	29
ORDINATIONS AND MEMBERS IN DISCERNMENT .....	30

**ONLINE ENGAGEMENT AND THE CHURCH**

VIRTUAL WORSHIP PREVALENCE ..... 31

VIRTUAL WORSHIP ATTENDANCE ..... 32

VIRTUAL WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS ..... 33

THE PANDEMIC IMPACT ON CONGREGATIONAL FINANCES ..... 34

ELECTRONIC GIVING. .... 35

**SPECIAL REPORTS**

**DENOMINATIONAL TRENDS: MEMBERS, CLERGY, AND CONGREGATIONS**

TRENDS IN SEARCH AND CALL ..... 36

“NEW FRAMEWORK GIVING” INCREASES FLOW OF GIFTS: IMPACT OF 2017 GENERAL SYNOD RESOLUTION ON GIVING ..... 38

OUR CHURCH’S WIDER MISSION: HISTORIC GIVING PROGRAM OF THE UCC IS KEY DRIVER OF VITALITY ..... 40

**UCC PROGRAMMATIC WORK**

2023 WASHINGTON D.C. OFFICE ACTION ALERTS ..... 42

GLOBAL MINISTRIES PARTNER PRIORITIES: 2023 ACTION ALERT ISSUES ..... 44

OUR WHOLE LIVES/SEXUALITY AND OUR FAITH. .... 45

INCREASING ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS IN THE UCC. .... 48

**REPORTS FROM AFFILIATED MINISTRIES**

HIGHLIGHTS ON COUNCIL FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE MINISTRIES (CHHSM)..... 49

INSURANCE BOARD’S CLAIM TRENDS & KEY TAKEAWAYS ..... 50

2023 CORNERSTONE FUND IMPACTS. .... 52

FUTURING HOPE: CHURCH LEGACY & COMPLETION..... 54

MISSION DRIVEN PLANNING, TRAINING LEADERS, & FINANCING THE FUTURE..... 57

# INTRODUCTION



Are you curious about how your church compares to others within the United Church of Christ (UCC)? Do you enjoy charts and research graphics? Have you wondered about the activities of the UCC's various partners and ministries? If you answered yes to any of these questions, this Statistical Profile is the right place to be!

Statistics, for some, are a foreign language. For others, they're familiar and comforting, even. Whether you're at either edge or somewhere in between, we hope the statistical tidbits presented here will provide a general overview of the denomination and assist us in illuminating the past, realizing the present, and envisioning the future.

This resource provides a numeric snapshot of the people, churches, and communities that are part of the UCC. In it you'll encounter fascinating trends and patterns that give a fuller picture of the evolving vibrancy of the various contexts of the UCC.

Throughout the profile, you can find "Reflections," which are questions to assist local church leaders in applying this data in their specific contexts. They can help facilitate conversations for the purpose of visioning future possibilities.

Information for the profile primarily comes from data reported through the UCC Data Hub annually to produce the UCC Yearbook & Directory. In addition, there are 12 Special Reports highlighting various areas of ministry within the UCC.

We hope you enjoy this edition!

THE CENTER FOR ANALYTICS, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT, AND DATA (CARDD)  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

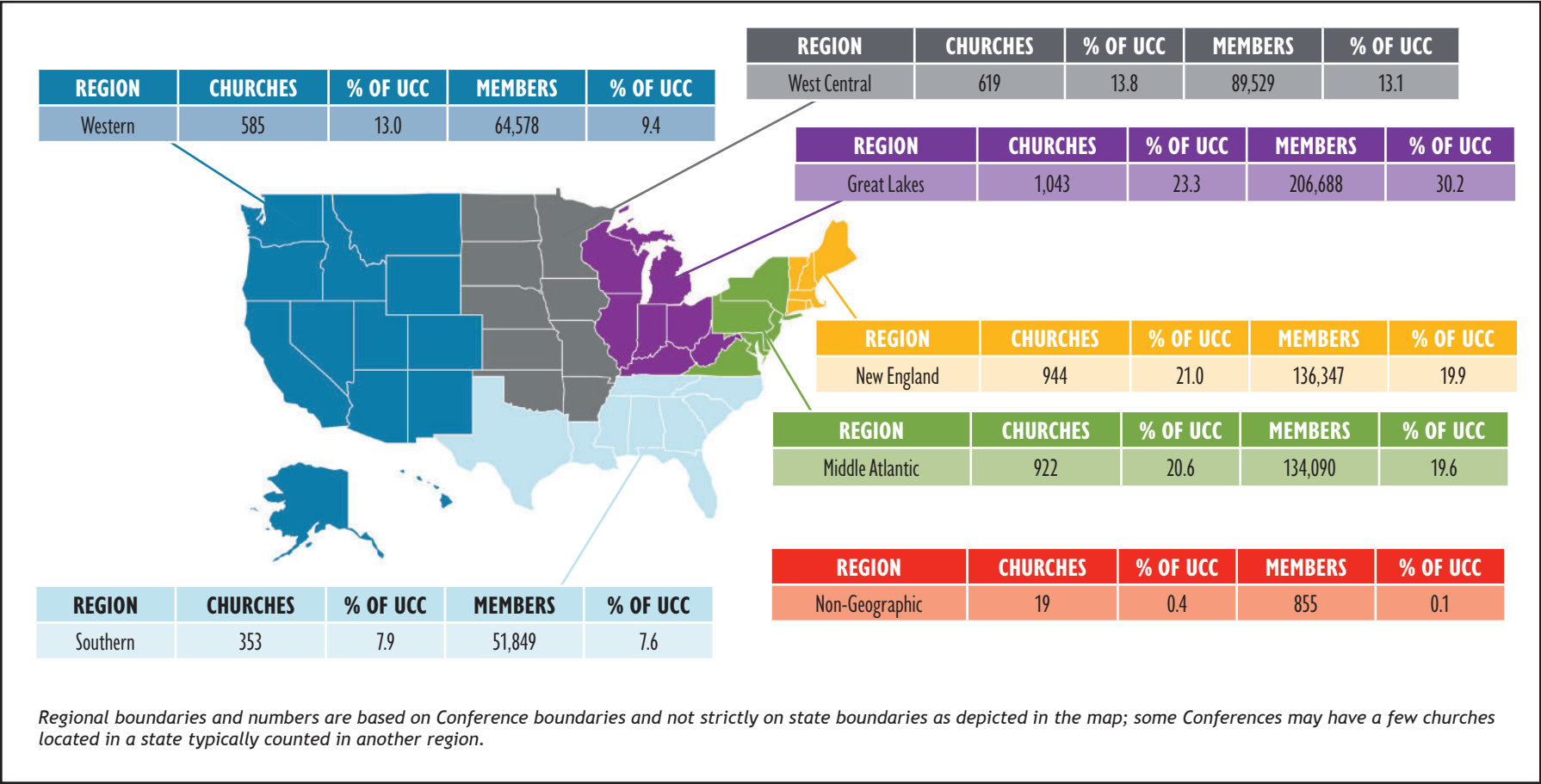
# CONGREGATIONS AND MEMBERS

At the end of 2023, there were 4,485 congregations in the United Church of Christ with a total of 683,936 members. The UCC’s congregations represent about 1.3% of total U.S. congregations\* while the membership of the UCC represents slightly less than one half of one percent (0.42%) of total U.S. religious adherents\* and about 0.20% of the U.S. population.\*\* UCC membership is concentrated in the Great Lakes, Middle Atlantic, and New England regions of the country.

\*2020 U.S. Religion Census <http://www.usreligioncensus.org/>

\*\*U.S. Census <https://www.census.gov>

## UCC CONGREGATIONS AND MEMBERS BY REGION



**TOP FIVE STATES: UCC CONGREGATIONS**

STATE	PERCENTAGE (NUMBER)
Pennsylvania	12.0 (538)
Massachusetts	7.1 (317)
Ohio	6.9 (310)
Illinois	6.1 (275)
New York	5.2 (233)

**TOP FIVE STATES: UCC MEMBERSHIP**

STATE	PERCENTAGE (NUMBER)
Pennsylvania	13.2 (90,433)
Illinois	9.9 (67,999)
Ohio	9.9 (67,977)
Massachusetts	7.3 (49,984)
Connecticut	7.2 (49,214)

*A detailed list of congregations and membership statistics by Conference can be found in the 2024 UCC Yearbook & Directory, p. 6.*

In examining the distribution of congregations by state, 12.0% of all UCC congregations were located in Pennsylvania, which reported the greatest number of congregations. In total, the top five states with the most congregations contained over one-third (37.3%) of all UCC congregations.

Membership, as with congregations, was concentrated largely in the Middle Atlantic, Great Lakes, and New England states. Nearly half of UCC members (47.6%) reside in the top five states by membership. Membership has become slightly more concentrated in these top five states over the past three years, with 47.1% of members belonging to churches in these states in 2019. Notably, churches in the states with the highest number of churches do not necessarily have the highest congregation counts. For example, Connecticut only has 4.8% of UCC churches but accounts for 7.2% of UCC members, while New York has 5.2% of UCC churches but only 3.9% of UCC members. This indicates that churches in Connecticut, on average, have a larger membership than churches in New York.

**REFLECTIONS**

What does membership mean for your church? How have the last few years impacted the ways people connect with your church? How are individuals who are not included in the membership figures interacting with your church? How else might you measure these people's participation in ways that better reflect how people engage with your church? What other ways could you capture how the people in your community are directly or indirectly connected to or impacted by your church?





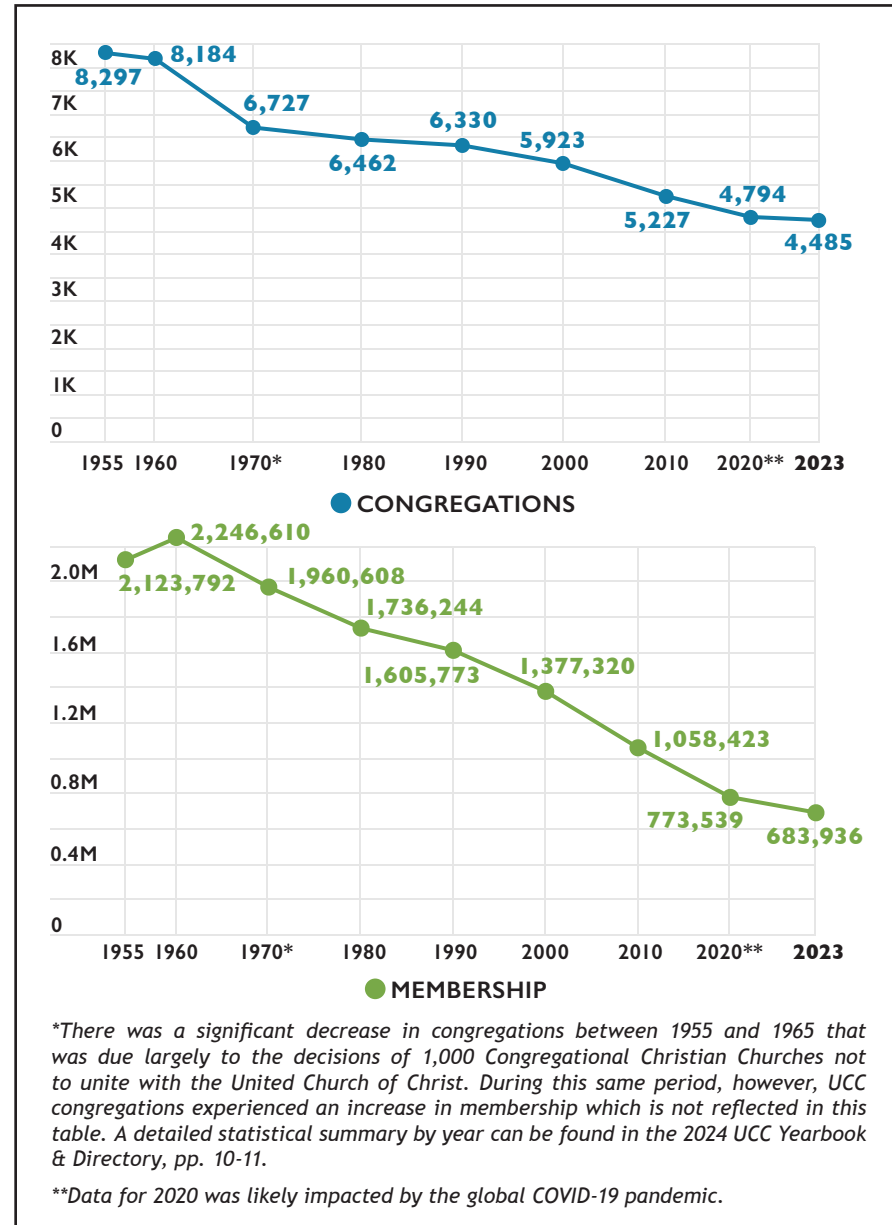
## GROWTH AND DECLINE

Similar to other Protestant denominations, the UCC has experienced a decline in the numbers of congregations and members in recent decades. From 2013 to 2023 alone, the UCC encountered a net loss of 631 congregations and 295,303 members. Some of this decline, however, began prior to the formation of the denomination in 1957 as the number of congregations steadily decreased despite membership increases in the UCC's early years.

In 2023, 136 congregations were removed from denominational records. This was only a 6.3% increase from 2022, when 128 congregations were removed from denominational records but a 60.0% increase from 2021, when 85 congregations were removed from denominational records, 2023 numbers is the second year that removals have been notably higher than previous levels: 72 in 2020, 43 in 2019, 85 in 2018, and 74 in 2017. From 2005 through 2007, the UCC experienced a loss of nearly three congregations per week on average (mostly as a result of General Synod's resolution regarding same-sex marriage). The 2023 and 2022 loss rates of 2.62 and 2.45 per week fall below this historic level but still outpace the previous five years' highs of 1.63 per week in 2018 and 2021.

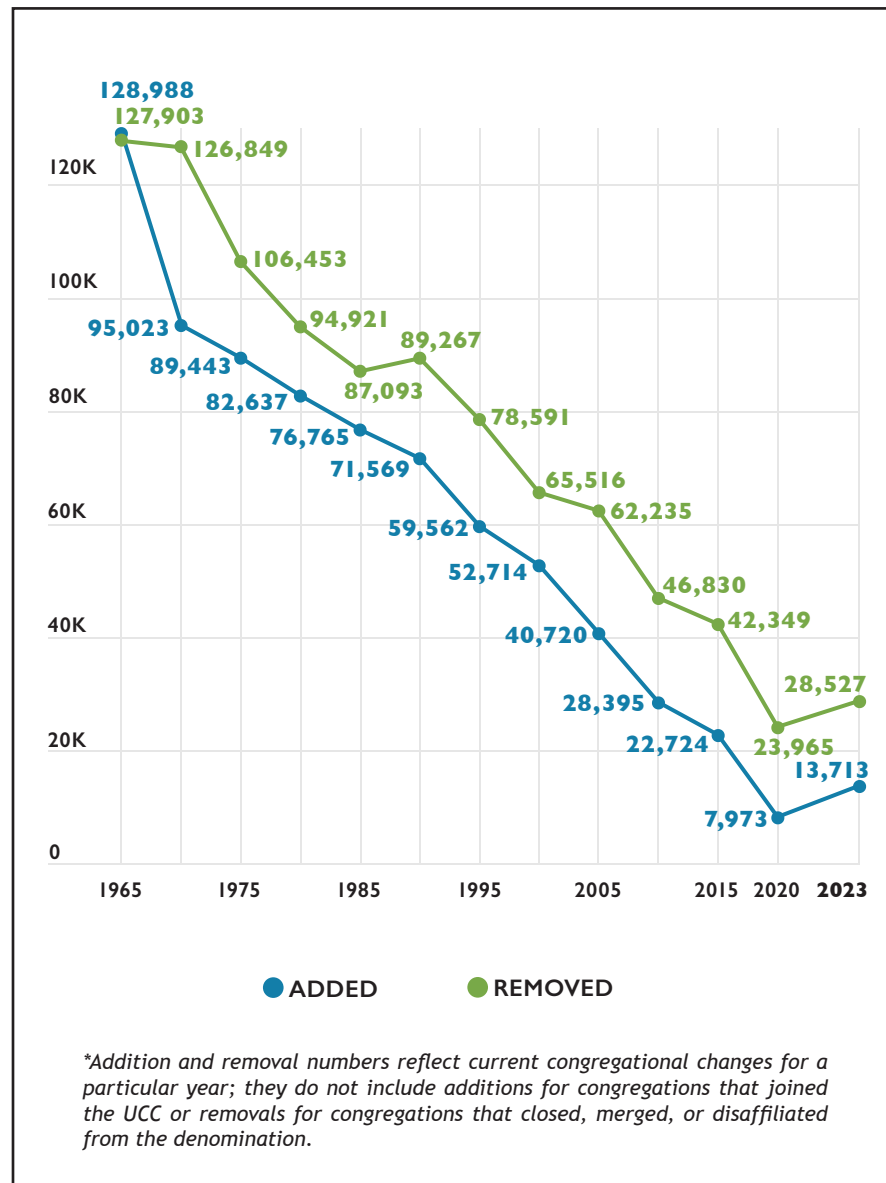
Over the past year, 13 congregations have been added to denominational records (this includes churches that received standing, affiliated, or merged with another congregation), which is a notable increase over the prior year, when 6 congregations were added. In total, 60 congregations received standing and were added to the UCC over the last five years, which is equivalent to a new congregation being added about every month.

## UCC CONGREGATION AND MEMBERSHIP CHANGES BY DECADE (1955–2023)\*





## MEMBERSHIP ADDITIONS AND REMOVALS OVER TIME (1965–2023)\*



## MEMBERSHIP GROWTH AND DECLINE

In general, the number of members removed each year exceeds the number of members added for that same time period. Members are removed from congregational records for several reasons, including death, transfer of membership to another denomination, or updating of local church membership records.

The net difference between UCC members added and removed from congregational membership rolls has continued to decline as total membership has decreased. In 2023, there was a net removal of 14,814, which is less than last year (16,370) and notably less than earlier points in the 2010s (19,625 in 2015 and 18,435 in 2010). (Note that net loss figures represented here are different than the net change figure represented in the UCC Yearbook & Directory, which is based on total membership.) Over time, the number of members added and removed have both declined although the net loss contributing to this decline has generally become smaller. Smaller numbers of members were added in 2020 (7,973) and 2021 (8,421) compared to other years—likely an effect of the COVID-19 pandemic—but this trend reversed in 2022 with 11,826 members added, and continued with even more members added in 2023 (13,713), possibly a reflection of new ways of attracting and including members through virtual worship.

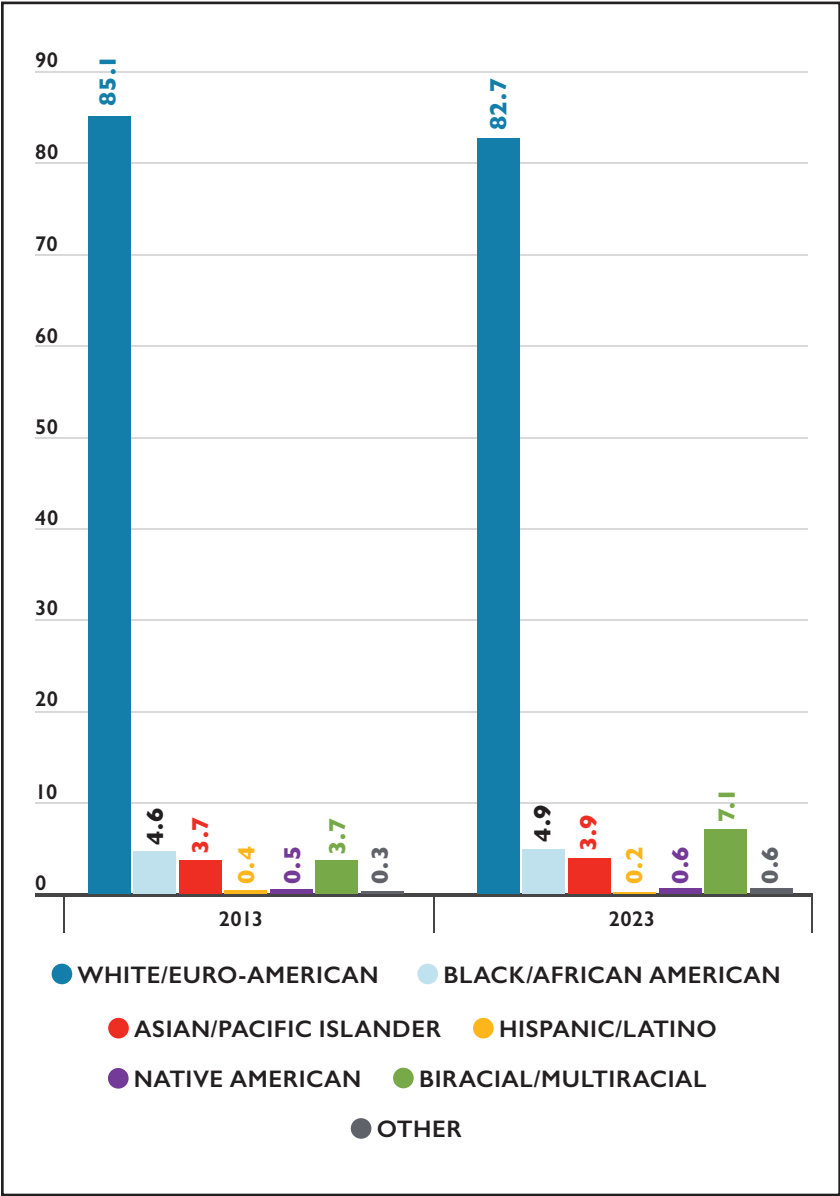
### REFLECTIONS

How have your church's membership and worship attendance changed over the last decade? In what ways have the last three pandemic years impacted churches closing, merging, or changing denominational affiliation? How do these closed, merged, changed affiliation, and new churches compare to the existing churches? Have new churches opened in your area despite the pandemic? What trends have you noticed in non-church organizations in your community, such as schools and nonprofits?

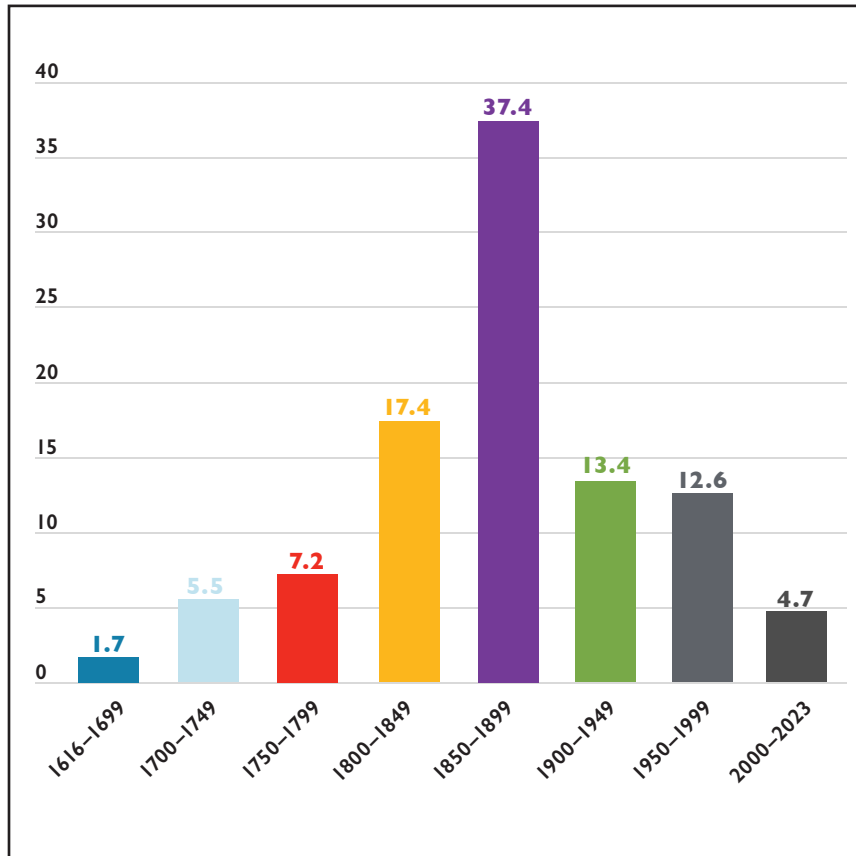
# CONGREGATIONS BY RACE/ETHNICITY

A substantial majority of congregations in the UCC self-identify as White/Euro-American (meaning that most members of a congregation belong to that particular racial/ethnic group). Over time, however, the UCC as a whole is becoming more racially/ethnically diverse. Over the last decade, the percentage of self-reported primarily White/Euro-American congregations decreased from 85.1% in 2013 to 82.7% in 2023. During this same time frame, the percentage of Biracial/Multiracial congregations increased from 3.7% in 2013 to 7.1% in 2023 and Other congregations increased from 0.3% to 0.6%. In addition, the percentage of Black/African American congregations increased by 0.3% and Asian/Pacific Islander congregations increased by 0.3%, respectively, during this time period. The proportion of Native American congregations also increased slightly, from 0.5% to 0.6%. The proportion of Hispanic/Latino congregations, however, has declined from 0.4% to 0.2%. One source of these overall trends may be the fact that the majority of congregations that close, merge, or disaffiliate with the denomination are primarily White/Euro-American congregations, thus decreasing the overall proportion of these congregations, while newer UCC congregations tend to be more racially/ethnically diverse.

UCC CONGREGATIONS BY RACIAL/ETHNIC SELF-IDENTIFICATION (PERCENTAGE)



## UCC CONGREGATIONS BY DATE OF ORGANIZATION (PERCENTAGE)



## CONGREGATIONS BY DATE OF ORGANIZATION

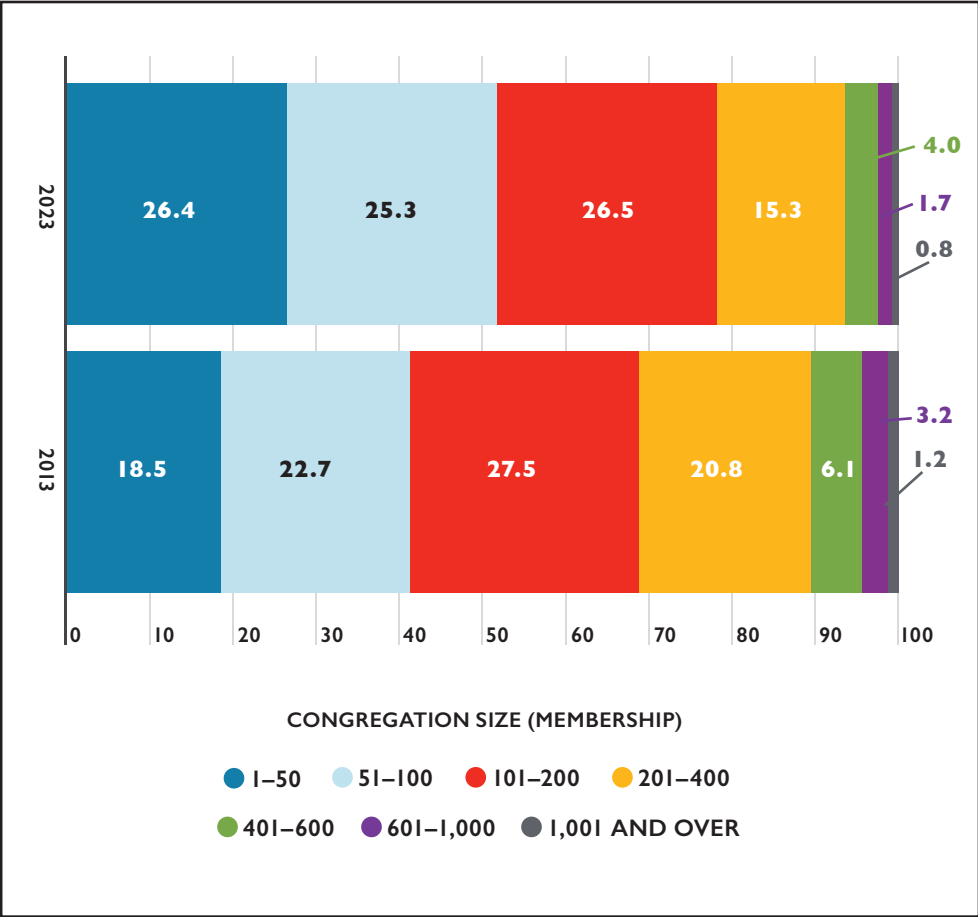
While the UCC has only been in existence since 1957, many of its congregations were founded by predecessor denominations. The vast majority of churches (85.0%) were organized before the UCC's founding year. The latter nineteenth century (1850-1899) was the most common founding era for UCC churches while just under 1 in 20 UCC churches (4.7%) were founded in 2000 or later, a percentage that continues to grow. The average founding date of congregations is 1872 while the median founding date is 1874.



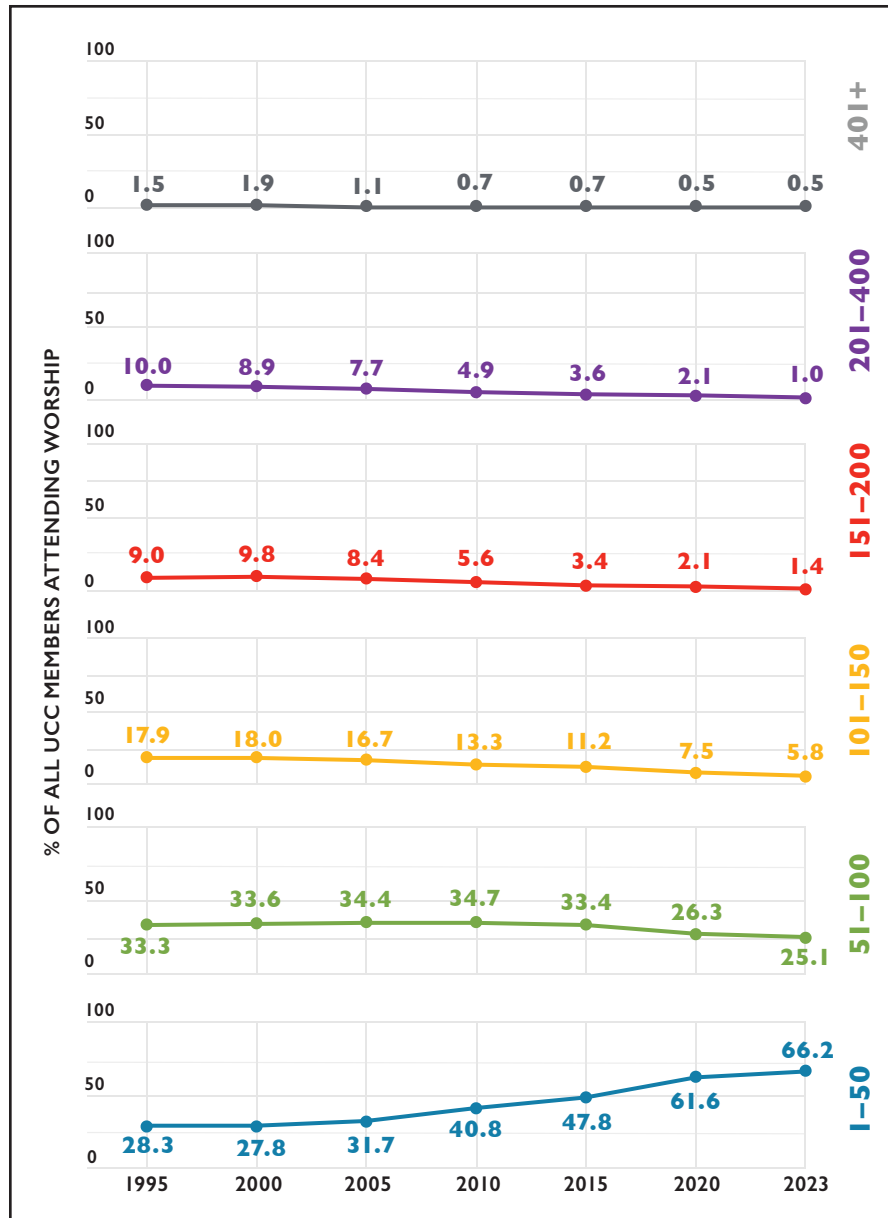
# CONGREGATION SIZE BY MEMBERSHIP

The vast majority (93.5%) of UCC congregations have 400 or fewer members, with slightly over half (51.7%) having 100 or fewer. This reflects an overall trend within the UCC of smaller churches outnumbering larger ones; in 2013, 89.5% of UCC churches had 400 or fewer members and 41.2% had 100 or fewer members. The biggest changes in the past 10 years have been in churches with fewer than 50 members, which have increased from 18.5% to 26.4% of churches since 2013, and churches with 201-400 members, which have decreased from 20.8% to 15.3% of churches since 2013.

PERCENTAGE OF CHURCHES BY CONGREGATION SIZE



## PERCENTAGE OF UCC CONGREGATIONS BY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE



## IN-PERSON WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

When considering worship attendance figures rather than membership size, even more congregations are categorized as smaller churches. In 2023, over 90% of churches in the UCC (91.3%) had a weekly worship attendance of 100 or fewer, which is 15.8% higher than in 2010 and 39.9% higher than in 2000. Over time, the percentage of congregations in the highest worship attendance categories has decreased steadily, with the most dramatic decreases occurring in congregations having 101-400 attenders. In 1995, 36.9% of congregations fell in this range, but by 2023, only 8.7% did. As a result, about two thirds (66.2%) of all UCC congregations now have a weekly worship attendance of 1-50 individuals.

While these shifts toward smaller worship attendance have been present for decades in the UCC, the restrictions on gathering size many churches faced during the COVID-19 pandemic may be partly responsible for the increases in the 1-50 category around 2020 and 2021. The widespread practice of virtual worship during the pandemic may also impact in-person worship attendance patterns. For information on virtual worship attendance in 2023, please see page 31.

### REFLECTIONS

How does weekly in-person worship attendance usually shift in your church throughout different times of the year? How do the pandemic years continue to affect your church's typical patterns of in-person worship attendance? What worship trends have you noticed in your congregation and community? What new worship practices adopted during the pandemic continue to linger in your church? Which ones have you let go?

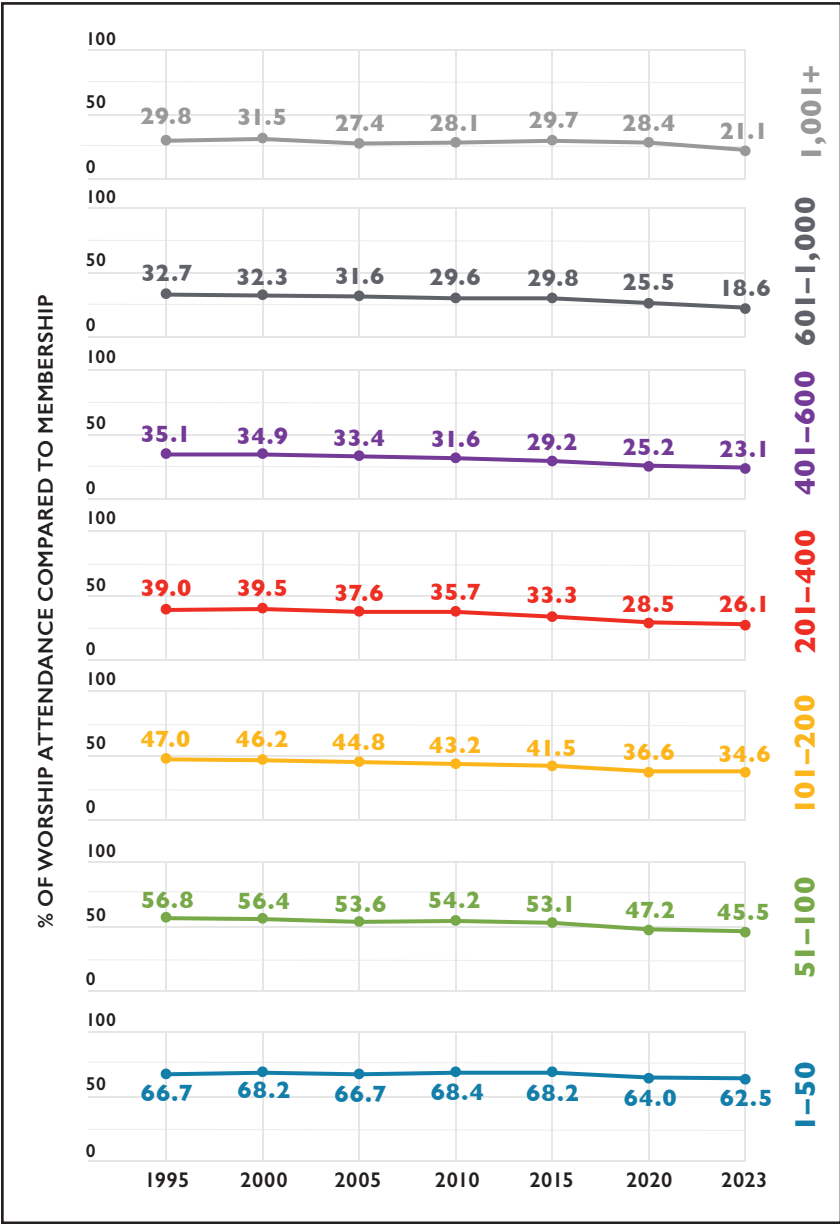
# IN-PERSON WORSHIP ATTENDANCE AND MEMBERSHIP

The relationship between in-person worship attendance and membership continues to shift incrementally over time. From 1995 to 2023, the median proportion of people attending in-person worship services compared to membership has declined across all membership categories, though the magnitude of this decline has varied. Small churches experienced the least decline, with 1-50 member churches declining from a ratio of 66.7 in 1995 to 62.5 in 2023, while larger churches experienced the most: in churches of 401-600 members, the ratio changed from 35.1 to 23.1 between 1995 and 2023, while churches of 601-1,000 experienced a decline in ratio from 32.7 to 18.6 during the same time frame. The overall patterns suggest that a substantially larger share of members may attend in-person worship in smaller congregations than larger congregations, though this cannot be known for certain, as those who attend in-person worship may not all be members. In addition, given the rapid increase in online worship since 2020, some members and other individuals may be participating in worship online, which is not reflected in these numbers (see page 33 for a more detailed analysis of online worship).

## REFLECTIONS

Are the people who worship at your church the same as or different from the people who are members? How much do local, national, and/or global events shape participation and attendance at your church? Are there particular days or worship events that people are more likely to attend? Are non-members who attend worship looking to join a church, just visiting your area for a short time, or are attending for other reasons? How do you know?

AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF WORSHIP ATTENDANCE TO MEMBERSHIP BY SIZE



## PERCENTAGE OF OPEN AND AFFIRMING (ONA) AND ACCESSIBLE CONGREGATIONS BY MEMBERSHIP SIZE

MEMBERSHIP	ONA	ACCESSIBLE
1–50	26.5%	77.1%
51–100	34.9%	87.2%
101–200	43.2%	91.7%
201–400	47.2%	97.2%
401–600	44.1%	96.6%
601–1000	60.8%	97.3%
1001+	55.6%	94.4%

## CONGREGATIONAL DESIGNATIONS

Since 2005, there has been a 181.2% increase in the number of Open and Affirming (ONA) congregations in the United Church of Christ, from 600 churches in 2005 (10.9% of all UCC churches at that time) to 1,687 churches (37.6% of all UCC congregations in 2023). ONA designations generally tend to be more common as church membership size increases; however, the proportion of churches with 1-50 or 51-100 members continues to grow every year.

Self-reported accessibility also tended to increase with church size. While the specific types and degrees of accessibility among these congregations are unknown, it is possible that these figures partly reflect the resources churches have available to address the accessibility of their space.



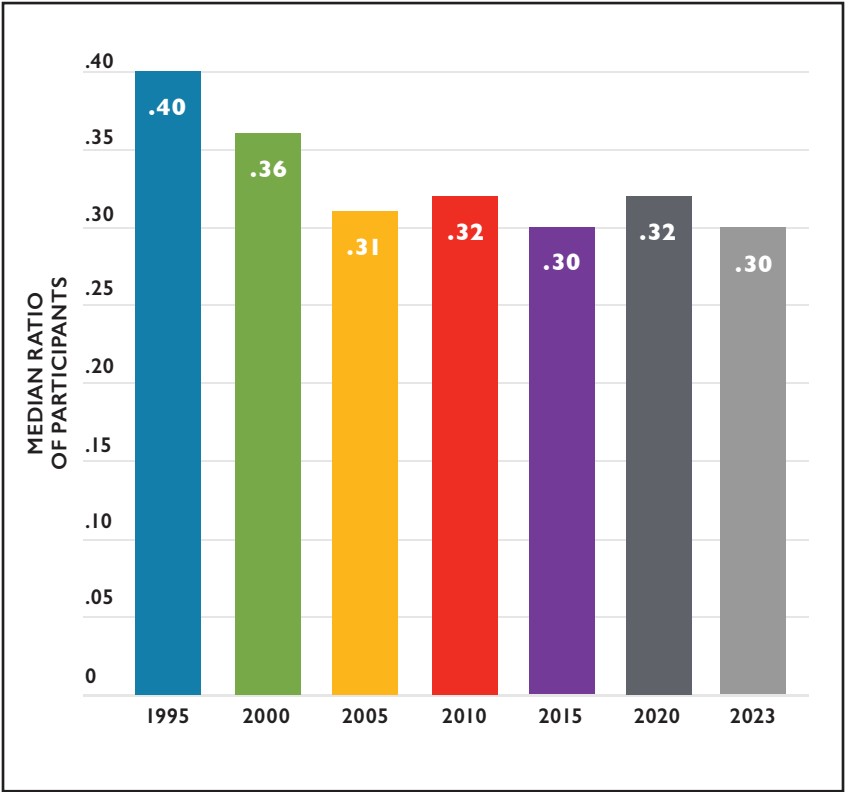


## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION/ FAITH FORMATION

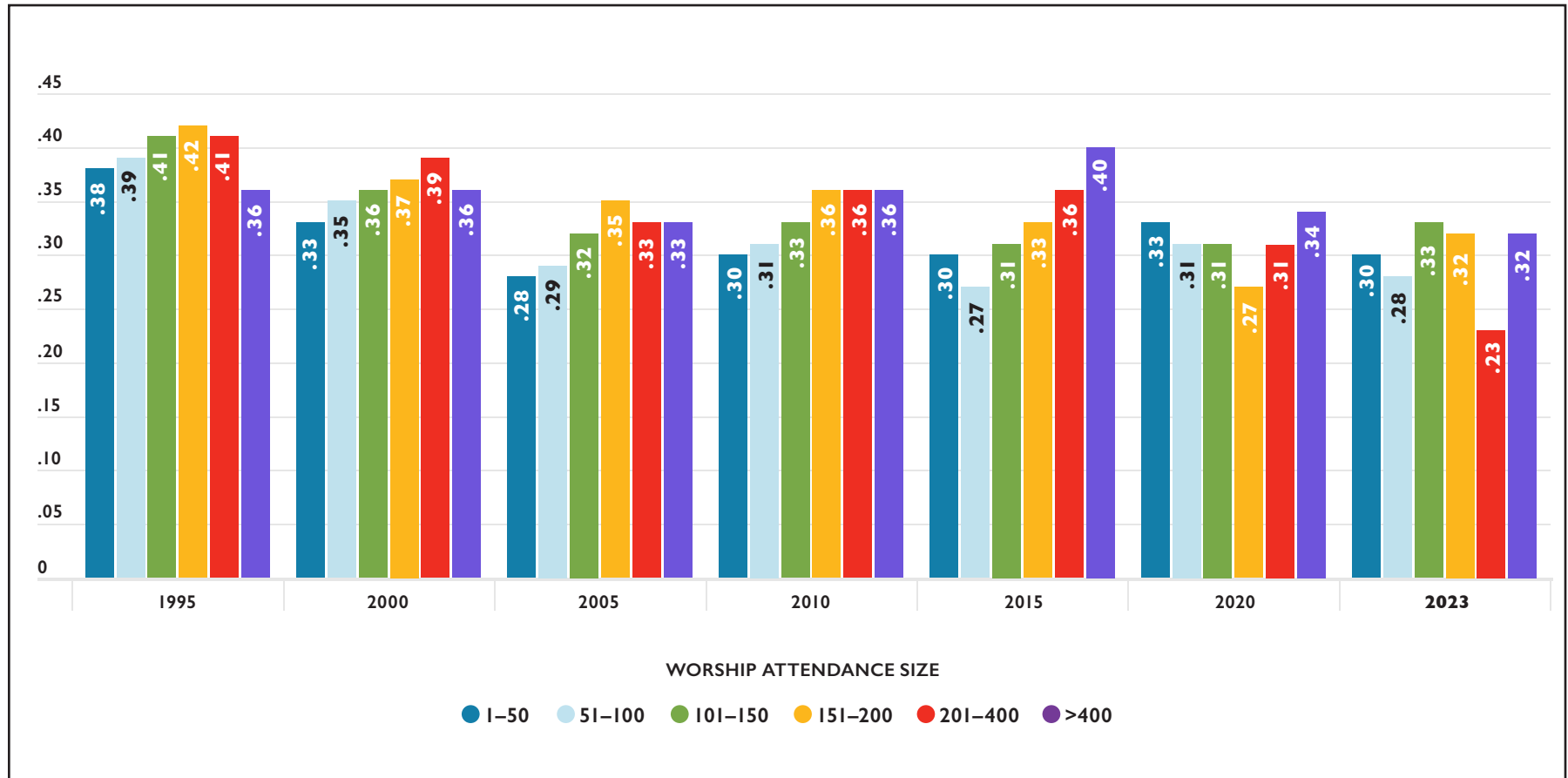
Since the 1950s, enrollment and attendance numbers for Christian Education/Faith Formation programming (also known as Church School or Sunday School enrollment in previous years) has been declining along with membership numbers. The median ratio of Christian Education/Faith Formation attendance to worship attendance has been quite stable since 2005, hovering between 0.30 and 0.32 when comparing 5-year increments. This suggests that just under one third of people who attend worship services also attend Christian Education/Faith Formation programming, though these categories may not perfectly overlap in practice. While there had been unusually large decreases in Christian Education/Faith Formation enrollment in 2020 (a net change of -18,504) and 2021 (a net change of -16,324) compared to 2019 (a net change of -8,867)—most likely a result of the pandemic—2022 was much closer to pre-pandemic levels, with a net change of -4,974. 2023 had the lowest net change in a decade, with a net change of only -1,312. In addition, the median ratio of attendance has remained similar to previous years.

The ratio of Christian Education/Faith Formation attendance to worship attendance is fairly similar across church sizes, with the exception of churches with 201-400 attendees, which had the lowest ratio (0.23).

MEDIAN RATIO OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION/  
FAITH FORMATION ATTENDANCE TO WORSHIP  
ATTENDANCE OVER TIME (1955–2023)



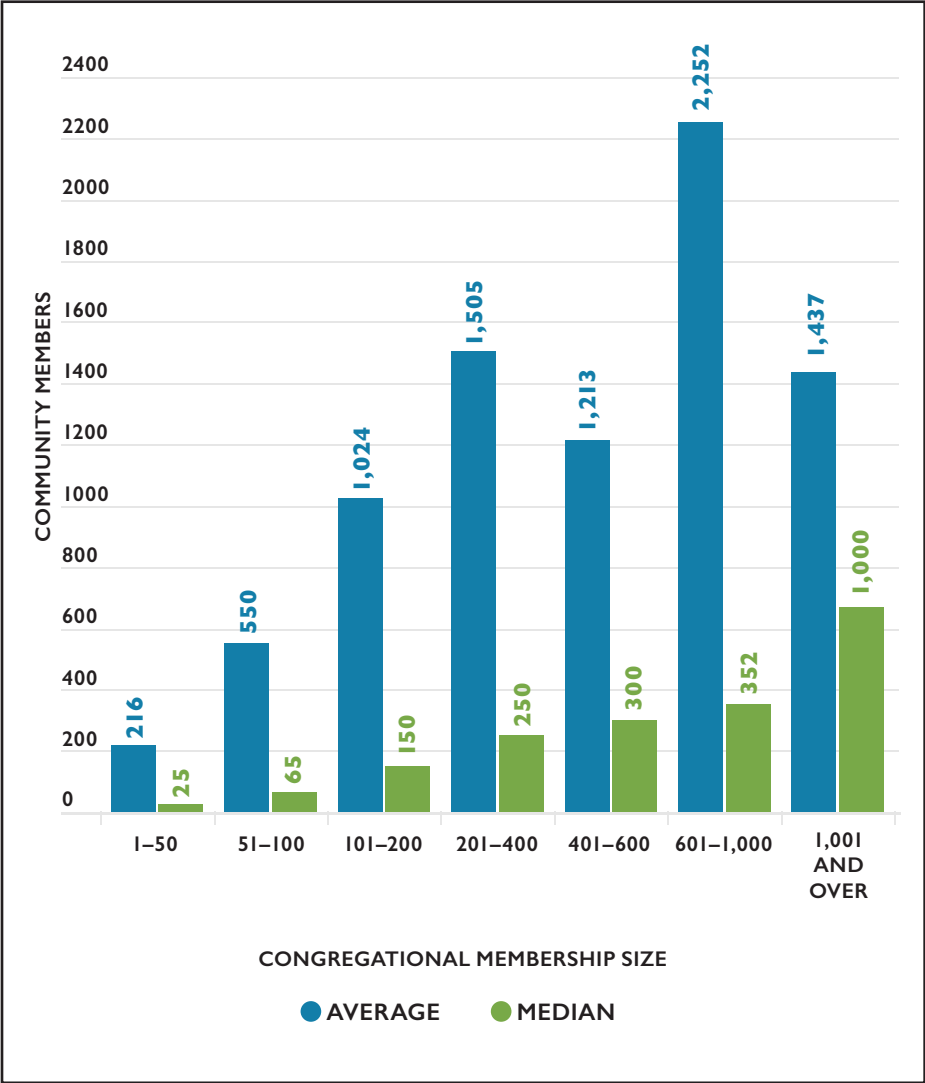
## RATIO OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION/FAITH FORMATION ATTENDANCE TO WORSHIP ATTENDANCE (MEDIAN) BY CHURCH SIZE



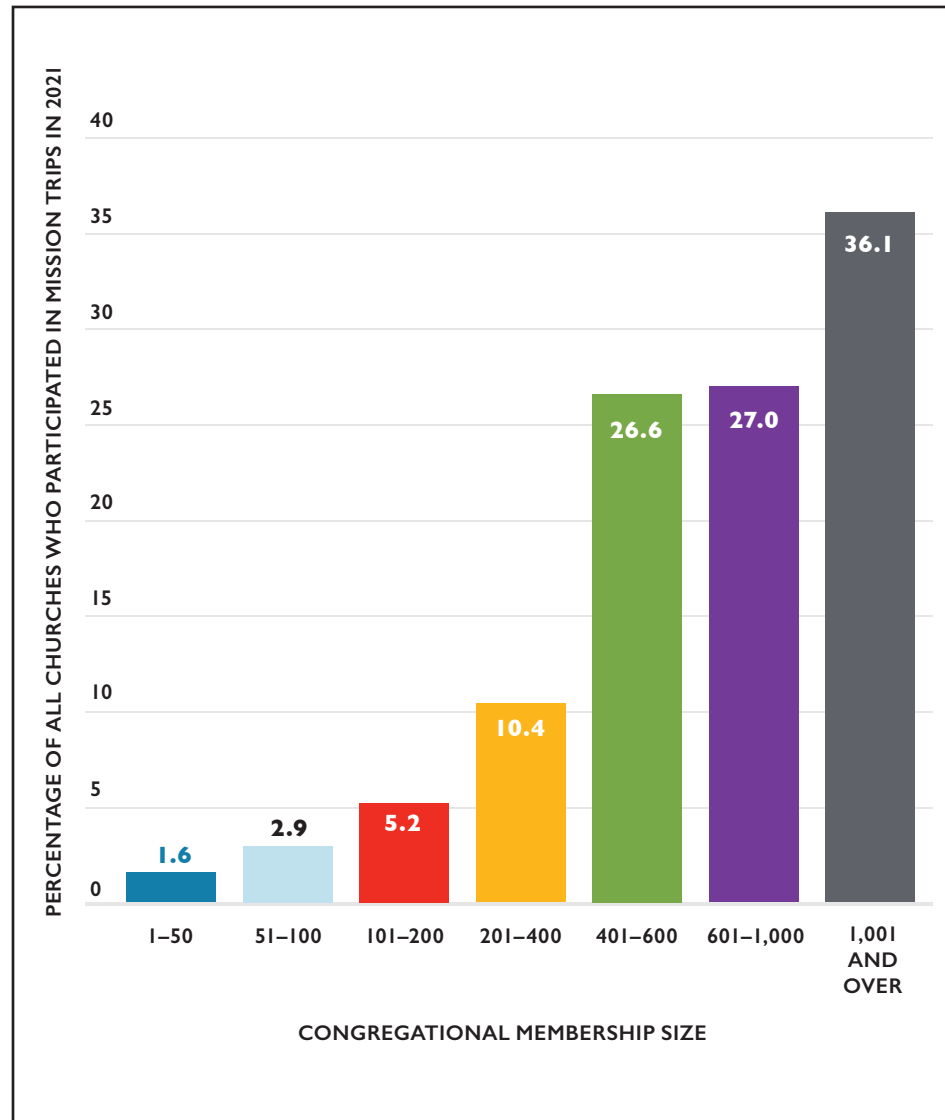
# CONGREGATIONAL OUTREACH

Congregational reports indicated that an average of 856 community members and a median of 100 community members were impacted by each local church’s outreach activities and initiatives in 2023. The total number of community members engaged in 2023 was 1,525,379, with 40.0% of congregations reporting. This continues to be lower than the 47.2% of congregations who reported engaging 2,055,868 in 2019 (38.8% of congregations reported engaging 1,211,038 in 2020), which may reflect the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on congregations’ capacities to engage with their communities in addition to a lowered response rate from congregations for annual data submission (58% in 2019 and 53% in 2023). The average number of community members is notably much higher than the median, which suggests that some churches may have a particular focus on community outreach or may engage in types of outreach that tend to engage more people than other types of outreach.

AVERAGE AND MEDIAN COMMUNITY MEMBERS ENGAGED BY CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERSHIP SIZE IN 2023



## DISTRIBUTION OF CONGREGATIONS PARTICIPATING IN MISSION TRIPS BY MEMBERSHIP SIZE



## MISSION/IMMERSION/SERVICE TRIPS

Since 2014, congregations have been asked to report whether members participated in a U.S. or international mission/immersion/service trip. In 2023, 265 or 5.9% of congregations reported participating in these types of trips. This represents a continuing increase in the same figures since the start of the pandemic in 2020, when 116 or 2.4% of congregations participated; since then, annual figures have steadily risen (145 or 3.1% in 2021 and 241 or 5.3% in 2022). These figures, however, remain much lower than the last pre-pandemic figures from 2019, when 574 or 11.8% of congregations participated in mission/immersion/service trips. Among churches that did report participating in mission/immersion/service trips in 2023, the largest churches (400+ members) most commonly engaged in this activity, which may reflect the amount of resources increasingly required to engage in such activities, particularly during times of economic uncertainty.



## LOCAL CHURCH FINANCIAL TRENDS

Average operating expenses for local UCC congregations in 2023 was \$190,350, a \$5,297 (2.9%) average increase from 2022. Average total income for a local church in 2023 was \$267,958, a \$21,282 (8.6%) average increase from 2022. This increase in total income builds on increases seen in 2022 and runs counter to a downward trend running from 2018-2021. Over the past decade, both the average operating expenses and income for local congregations have increased - from \$164,803 in expenses (a 15.5% increase) and \$261,489 in income (a 2.5% increase) in 2013.

In 2013, Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM) giving represented 4.7% of total local church expenditures. This percentage decreased to 3.3% of total local church expenditures in 2023.

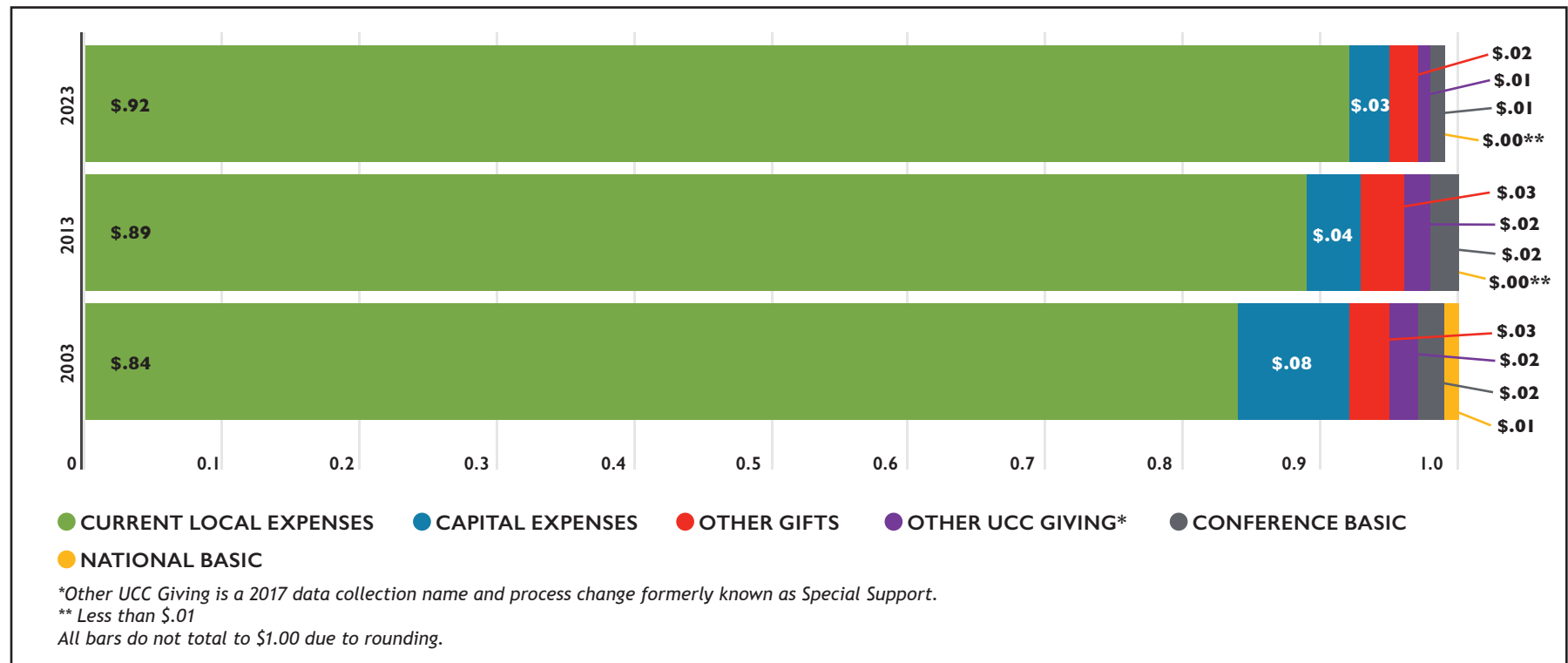
### TOTAL LOCAL CHURCH EXPENDITURES (2019–2023)

EXPENDITURE	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Current Local Expenses	\$865,208,873	\$802,588,216	\$807,964,727	\$826,814,588	\$830,114,283
Total Mission Support	\$51,535,392	\$46,095,281	\$44,631,304	\$48,271,601	\$45,320,887
Capital Expenses	\$50,254,926	\$34,893,962	\$27,893,391	\$29,444,453	\$25,925,714
TOTAL	\$966,999,191	\$883,577,459	\$880,489,422	\$904,530,642	\$901,360,884

## THE CHURCH DOLLAR

In the last two decades, the distribution of the church dollar has experienced some noticeable shifts. Current local expenses have increased by \$.08 while all others have decreased or remained steady. All types of UCC Giving (Conference Basic, National Basic, and Other UCC Giving) have decreased or remained unchanged in the past 20 years.

### CHANGING DISTRIBUTION OF THE CHURCH DOLLAR



### REFLECTIONS

With increased demands on local churches to maintain buildings, provide salaries and benefits for pastors and other staff, and respond to needs in the community, how does your congregation balance between internal expenses and mission giving to the wider church and other organizations? What might someone learn about your congregation by only looking at the financial summary? How do your vision and/or mission inform your church's decisions about its budget? In what ways would you consider modifying your budget to represent your mission and values more accurately, if at all?

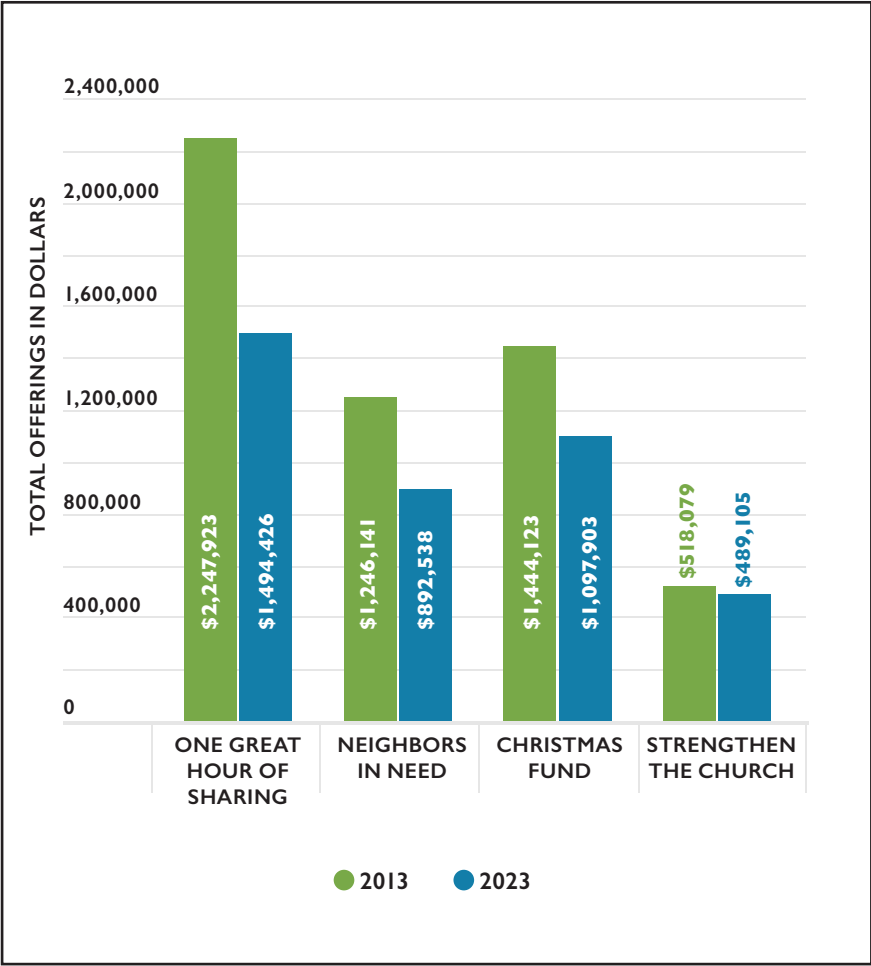
## STEWARDSHIP AND MISSION SUPPORT

Totals for mission support and giving by local congregations of the United Church of Christ decreased over the past several years. Over the past decade, the number of churches that have not given to any Special Mission Offering has continued to increase. This is a trend we have been seeing since 2017.

In terms of dollars given, all the Special Mission Offerings have seen a decrease this year compared to 2013. The total giving to all Special Mission Offerings in 2023 decreased by 27.2% when compared to 2013. This is comparable to the decrease seen from 2011-2021 (29.8%). While these are not as large of a 10-year decrease as seen from 2011-2021 (31.0%), it is still much larger than decreases seen prior to the COVID-19 pandemic: the decrease from 2009-2019 was 11.7%.

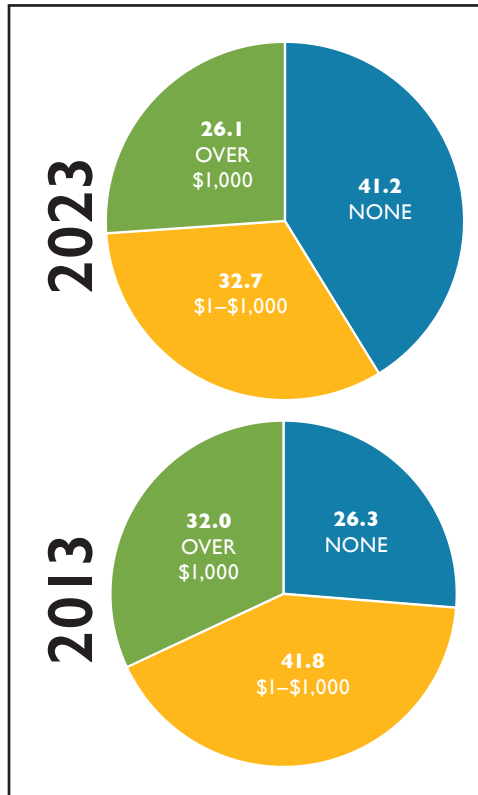
Total Mission Support for 2023 fell from the previous year by \$2,950,714 (6.1%) and has fallen \$6,214,505 (12.1%) since 2019. The largest portion of this drop-off took place between 2019 and 2020, which saw a \$5,440,111 (10.6%) decrease.

LOCAL CHURCH SPECIAL MISSION OFFERINGS

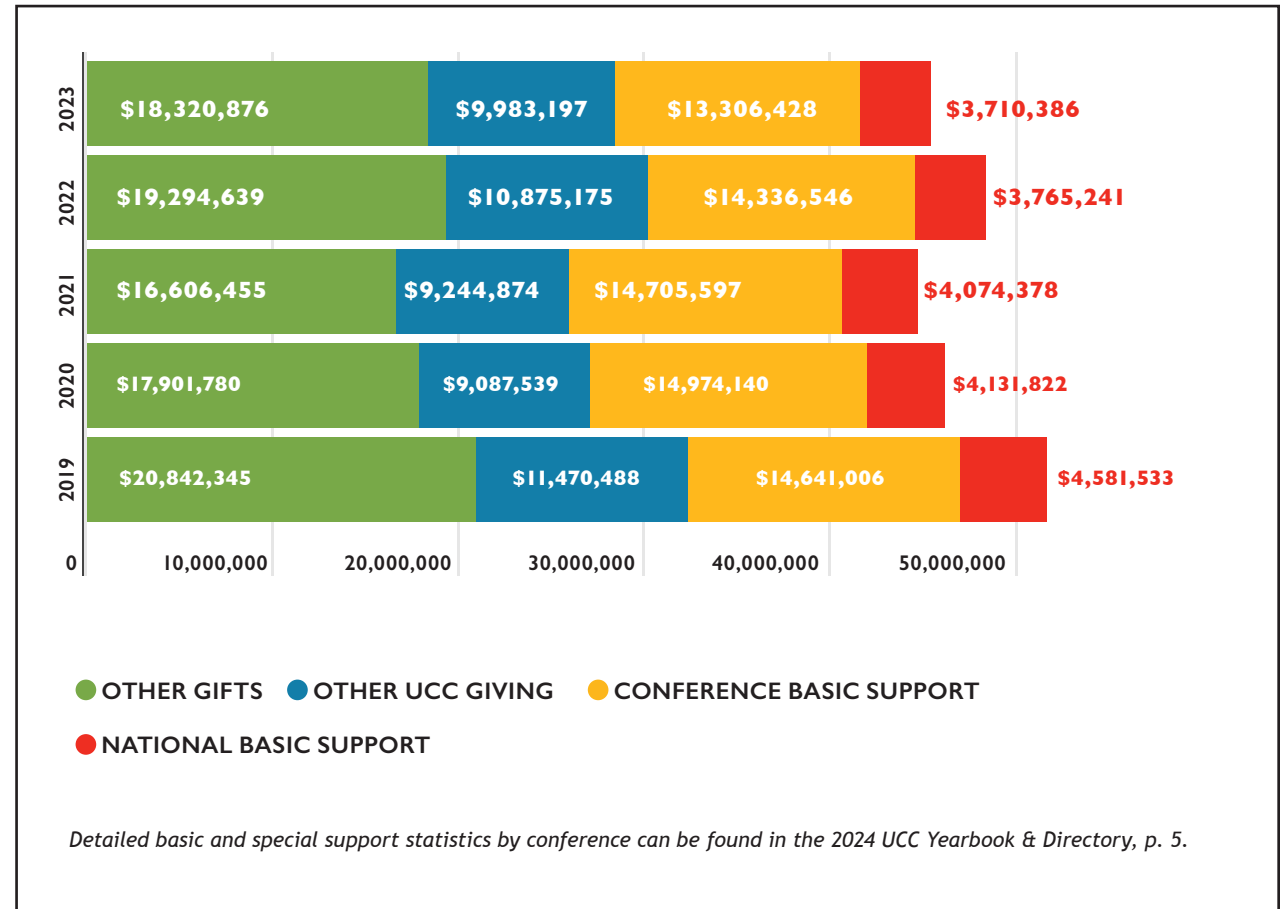




### PERCENTAGE OF UCC CHURCHES CONTRIBUTING TO SPECIAL OFFERINGS BY DONATION SIZE



### TOTAL MISSION SUPPORT



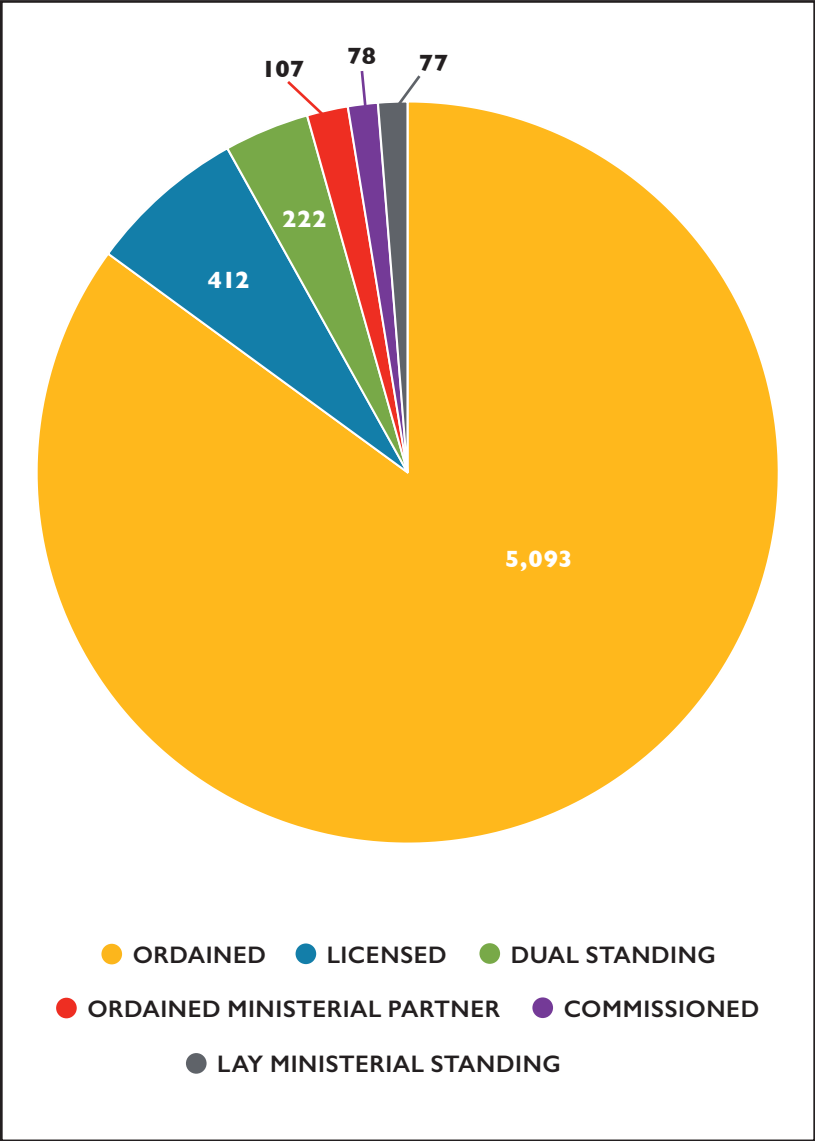
### REFLECTIONS

How do these overall mission support trends align with or differ from your own congregation's trends? Which special offerings of the UCC - through your Association, Conference, or the National Setting - did your congregation support? Were there any other special appeals that your congregation supported this past year? How have the last few pandemic-informed years impacted your church's giving?

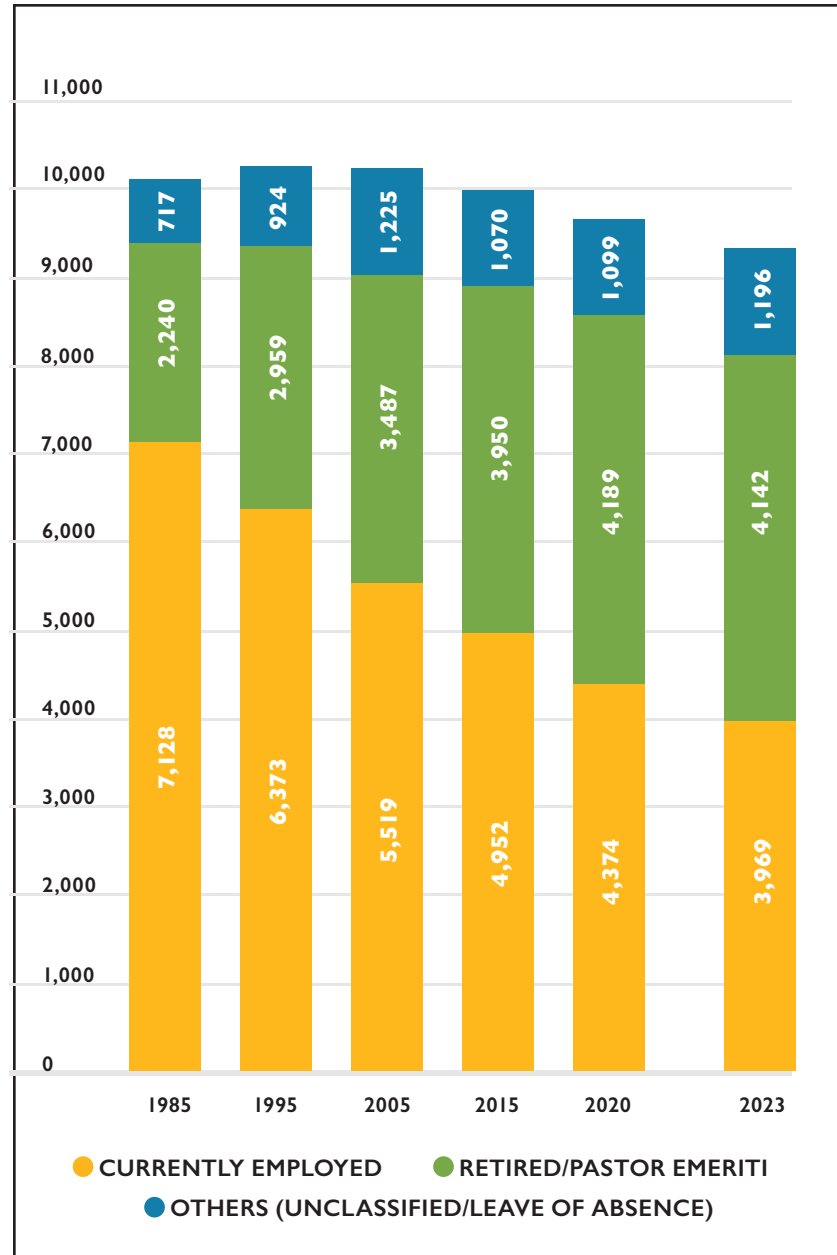
## SUMMARY OF UCC AUTHORIZED MINISTERS

As reported for 2023, there were a total of 5,989 active, non-retired Authorized Ministers in the United Church of Christ (Ordained, Licensed, Lay Ministerial Standing, Dual Standing, and Ordained Ministerial Partner). Ordained Ministers were the largest percentage of active ministers reported (85.0%); and Licensed Ministers comprised the second largest group of Authorized Ministers (6.9%). In addition, three active, non-retired ministers hold standing in the Congregational Christian Church.

### ACTIVE, NON-RETIRED AUTHORIZED UCC MINISTERS



## SUMMARY OF UCC ORDAINED MINISTERS



## SUMMARY OF UCC ORDAINED MINISTERS

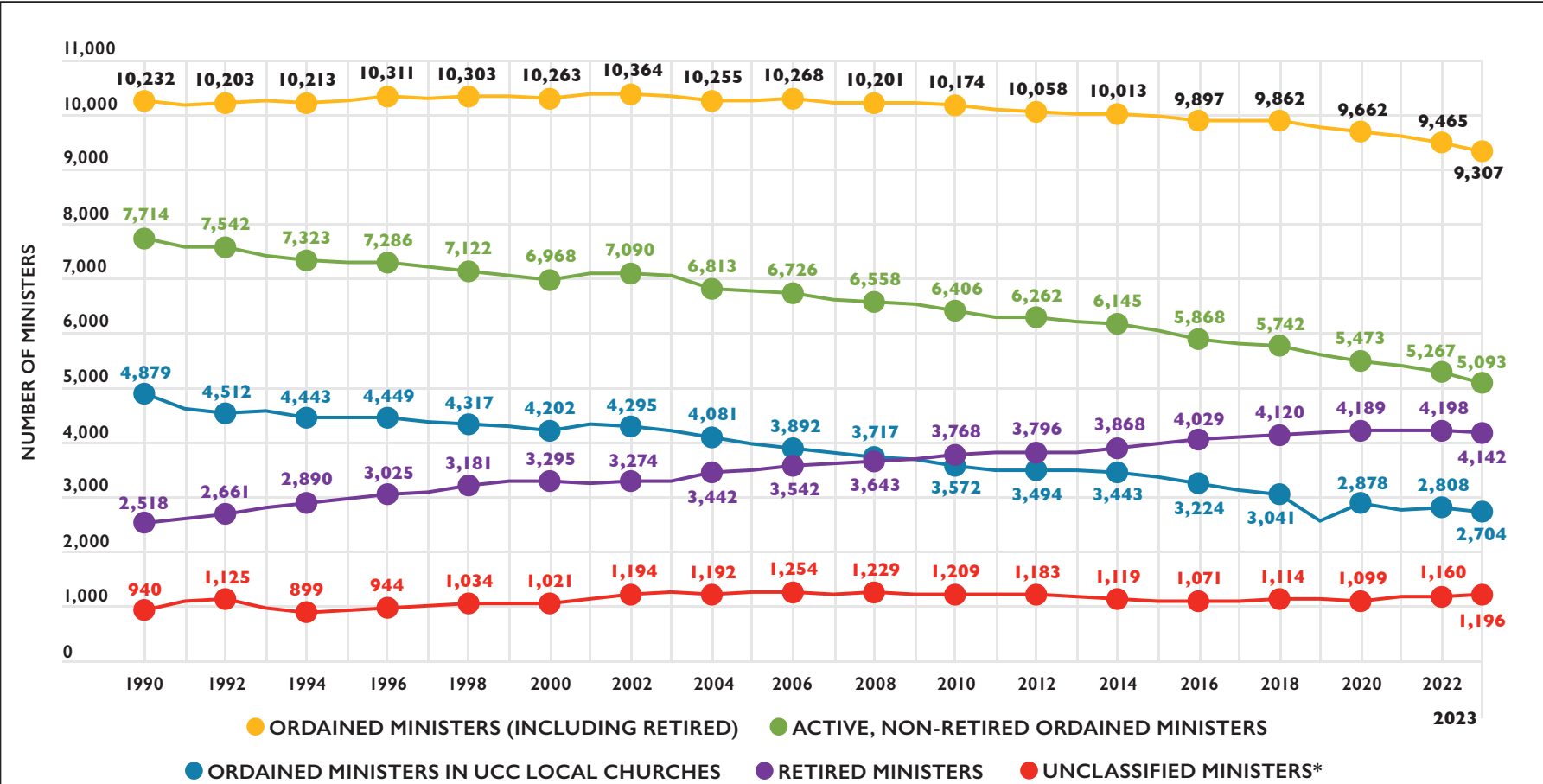
At the end of 2023, there were 9,307 reported Ordained Ministers in Full Standing, including Retired Ministers and Pastor Emeriti. Of those 9,307 Ordained Ministers, nearly one-half (42.6% or 3,969) were employed, with 68.1% (2,704) of those employed actively serving in a local church (either a UCC church or non-UCC church). Four out of ten (44.5% or 4,142) were Retired Ministers or Pastor Emeriti, and 12.9% (1,196) were unclassified (ministers without a reported specialty at the time of Yearbook production) or were on a leave of absence.

Over the last 38 years (1985 to 2023), Ordained Ministers only had a numerical net decrease of 778 (7.7%). However, the number of employed Ordained Ministers decreased by 44.3%, while Retired Ministers and Pastor Emeriti saw an increase of 84.9% over this same 38-year period.

## TRENDS IN ORDAINED MINISTRY OVER TIME

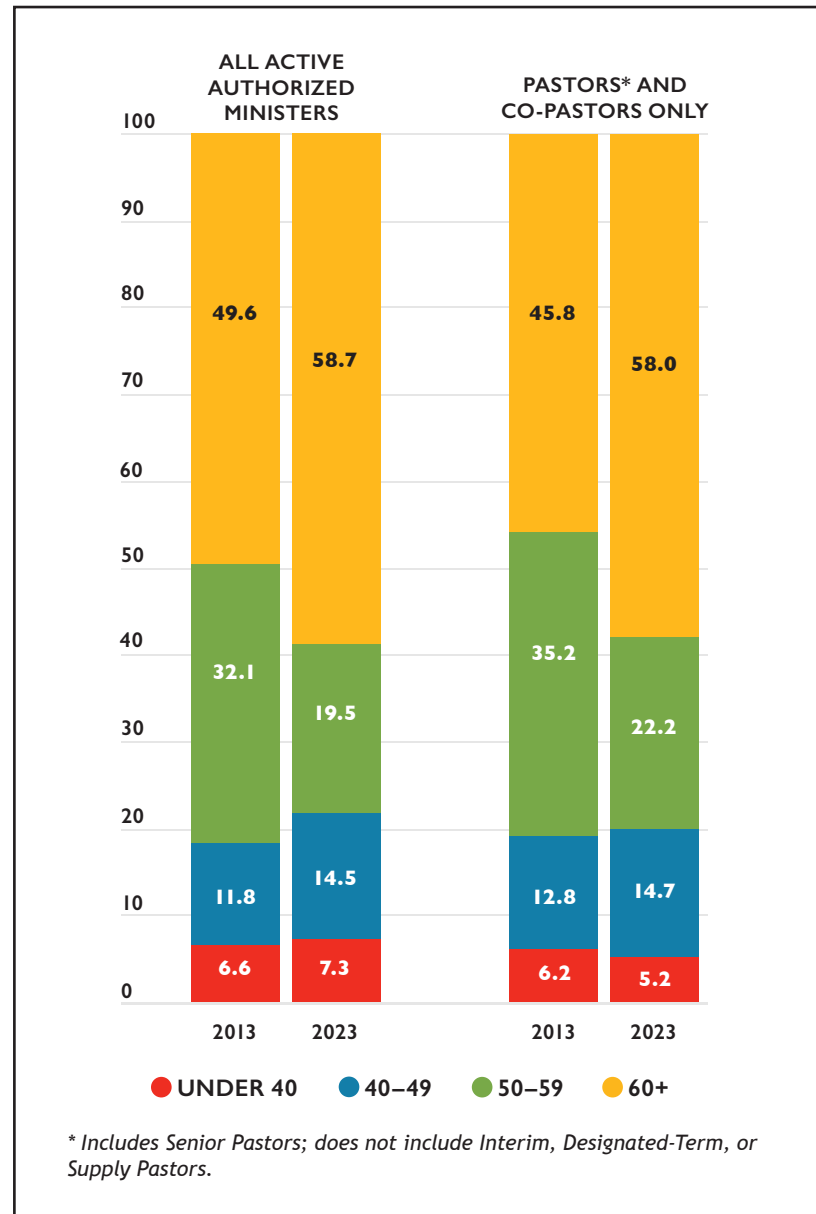
Since 1990, the number of Ordained Ministers has remained relatively stable, though there are slight incremental decreases in more recent years. At the same time, the number of Retired Ministers and Pastor Emeriti has increased steadily. Notably, since 1990 the decline in ordained ministers (9.0%) has been much smaller than the declines in congregations (29.1%) or membership (57.4%).

TRENDS IN ORDAINED MINISTRY (1990–2023)



\* Ministers who don't have a particular position listed on their record; includes Leave of Absence ministers, though the number of these ministers is minimal within the overall total.

## ACTIVE, NON-RETIRED AUTHORIZED MINISTERS BY AGE (PERCENTAGE)



## AUTHORIZED MINISTERS BY AGE

Data regarding Authorized Ministers in the denomination reflects a population of predominantly older clergy. Over one half of all active, non-retired Authorized Ministers were age 60 or above (58.7%) and over three-quarters (78.2%) were 50 and older. Local Church Pastors and Co-Pastors are increasingly comprised of the oldest clergy in the UCC, with over half (58.0%) of all congregations in 2023 being served by Authorized Ministers aged 60 or above. Only 45.8% were served by this group in 2013. The number of congregations being served by clergy under 50 has remained relatively stable.

### REFLECTIONS

How do the presented trends relate to the trends in your church? What patterns have you noticed in the approximate ages of the pastors who have served your congregation? As retirees and second- and third-career individuals increasingly enter seminary and become ordained, how do you anticipate this might impact the UCC and other similar traditions in the future? What are ways you can prepare for such an impact?

AUTHORIZED MINISTERS BY RACE/ETHNICITY

The majority (83.8%) of all active, non-retired UCC Authorized Ministers identified as White/Euro-American, with 16.2% identifying as non-white. Among the various types of authorization, Ministers with Dual Standing continue to be the most racially/ethnically diverse group, with nearly a third (32.9%) of ministers identifying as non-white. Ministers with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing were the least racially/ethnically diverse authorization group, with only 9.0% identifying as non-white.

UCC AUTHORIZED MINISTERS BY RACIAL/ETHNIC SELF-IDENTIFICATION (PERCENTAGE)

RACE/ETHNICITY	ORDAINED (N = 4,411)	LICENSED (N = 294)	LAY MINISTERIAL STANDING (N = 44)	COMMISSIONED (N = 55)	DUAL STANDING (N = 146)	ORDAINED MINISTERIAL PARTNER STANDING (N = 78)	OVERALL (N = 5,028)
White/Euro-American	84.6	78.2	84.1	85.5	67.1	91.0	83.8
Black/African American	10.9	13.9	13.6	12.7	13.0	5.1	11.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.3	4.4	0.0	0.0	17.1	0.0	2.8
Hispanic/Latino	1.3	0.7	2.3	1.8	2.7	3.8	1.4
Native American	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Biracial/Multiracial	0.6	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6
Other	0.1	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Totals do not equal 100 due to rounding.							

## ORDAINED MINISTERS IN LOCAL CHURCHES BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Regarding racial/ethnic representation in local church pastor positions, different patterns emerge based on position. Among Senior/Solo Pastors, clergy who identify as Black/African American were proportionally under-represented (8.5% compared to 11.1% of all clergy), while clergy who identify as White/Euro-American were represented at a higher rate among Senior/Solo Pastors (86.0%) compared to clergy overall (83.8%). Associate/Assistant Pastors were notably more racially/ethnically diverse compared to clergy overall, with 32.7% of clergy self-identifying as non-white compared to 16.2% of all active, non-retired Authorized Ministers.

### PERCENT OF LOCAL CHURCH PASTOR POSITIONS OF UCC ORDAINED MINISTERS BY RACE/ETHNICITY

RACE/ETHNICITY	SOLO/SENIOR PASTOR	CO-PASTOR	ASSOCIATE/ASSISTANT PASTOR	INTERIM/DESIGNATED-TERM/SUPPLY PASTOR
White/Euro-American	86.0	83.6	67.3	91.7
Black/African American	8.5	13.7	26.2	5.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.6	1.4	2.7	1.8
Hispanic/Latino	1.1	1.4	3.0	0.0
Native American	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.4
Biracial/Multiracial/Other	0.7	0.0	0.8	0.7

*Totals do not equal 100 due to rounding.*





## AUTHORIZED MINISTERS BY GENDER

In total, 53.5% of active, non-retired Ordained Ministers in the United Church of Christ identified as female, 45.9% identified as male, and 0.6% identified as transgender/gender-variant. This is a notable shift from the early 2000s, when, according to the 2003 UCC Statistical Handbook, only 27% of all Ordained Ministers identified as female. Among other categories of Authorized Ministers, Licensed and Dual Standing Ministers proportionately identified more often as male, while more than 4 out of every 5 Commissioned Ministers identified as female.

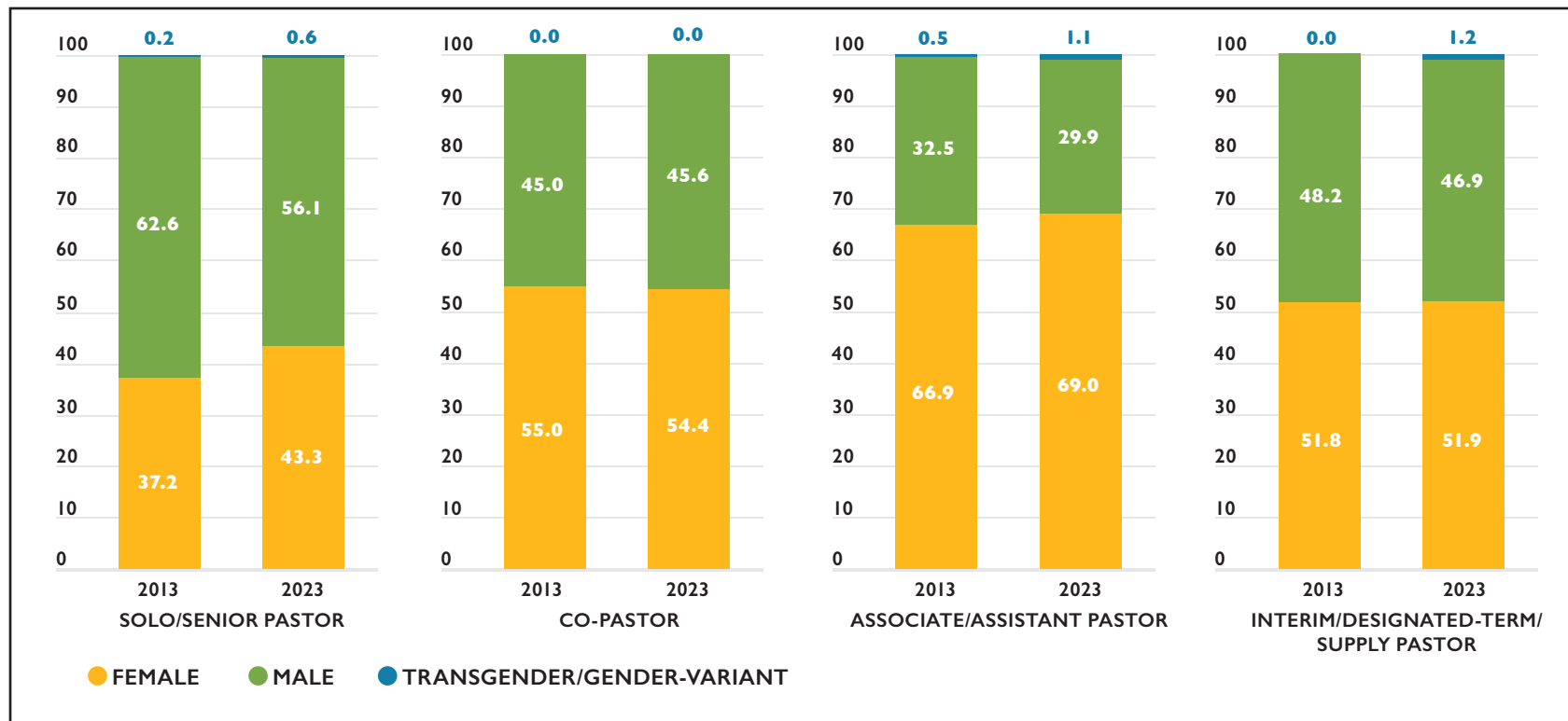
GENDER OF ACTIVE, NON-RETIRED UCC AUTHORIZED MINISTERS (PERCENTAGE)

AUTHORIZATION	FEMALE	MALE	TRANSGENDER/GENDER-VARIANT
Ordained	53.5	45.9	0.6
Licensed	42.2	57.8	0.0
Lay Ministerial Standing	50.0	48.1	1.9
Commissioned	81.3	18.7	0.0
Dual Standing	35.1	64.9	0.0
Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing	55.9	44.1	0.0
<i>*Totals do not equal 100 due to rounding.</i>			

## ORDAINED MINISTERS IN LOCAL CHURCHES BY GENDER

The percentage of active, non-retired female Ordained Ministers serving in local UCC church pastoral positions has continued to increase over the past several years. The rate at which females are serving in local church pastoral positions is increasing at a higher rate for Senior/Solo Pastors than any other local church position. The earliest UCC Statistical Handbook from 2000 indicates only 21.9% of Senior/Solo Pastors were female, by 2013 this percentage had increased to 37.2%. Our most recent data indicates females are now serving as Senior/Solo Pastors at a rate of more than four in ten (43.3%).

### LOCAL CHURCH PASTOR POSITIONS OF UCC ORDAINED MINISTERS BY GENDER



### REFLECTIONS

What social trends could be driving the increased proportion of female clergy overall? Why might female clergy be underrepresented in Senior/Solo Pastor positions? How can call processes and church policies create expansive welcoming and supportive environments for clergy of every gender? What is something you could do today to begin cultivating such an environment?

## ORDINATIONS AND MEMBERS IN DISCERNMENT

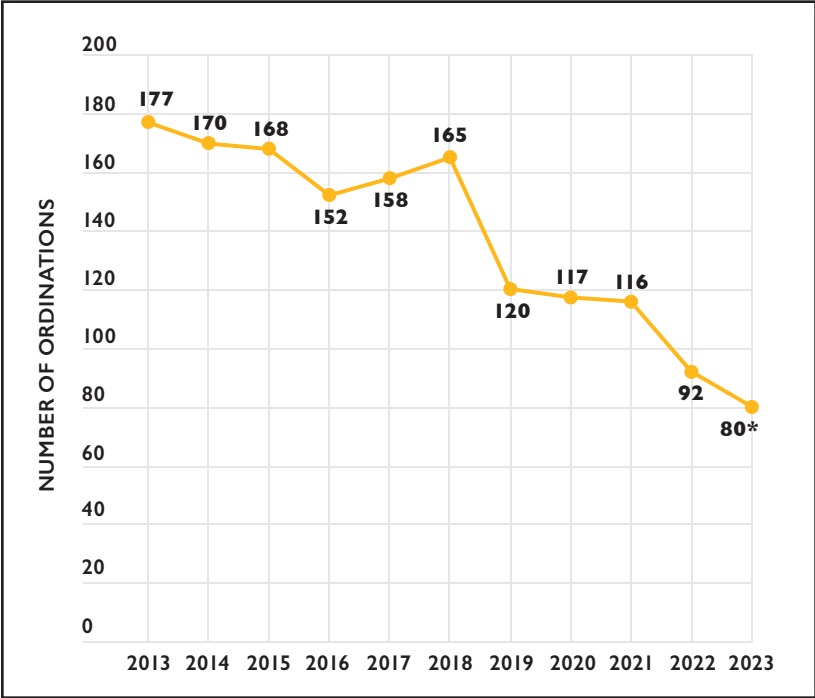
The number of ordinations per year has decreased over the past decade. Overall, the number of ordinations has been in decline except for 2018 when there was a notable increase in ordinations over the previous year. When reviewing trends over the past several decades, fluctuations like that around 2018 are not uncommon, with the overarching long-term trend continuing downward.

As of July 2024, there were 580 active Members in Discernment (MIDs) on record within the denominational database. Some regions—Southern and Western—had proportionally more MIDs compared to their overall membership proportion in the UCC.

Among MIDs who report their gender identity, females comprised 57.9%, a greater percentage than that of current female Authorized Ministers, who currently comprise 53.5% of all non-retired Ordained clergy. It is important to note that one-third (34.8%) of all MIDs do not have a gender recorded. Members in Discernment were also more racially/ethnically diverse than current Ordained Ministers, with 31.3% identifying as non-white (compared with 15.3% of all Ordained Ministers identifying as non-white).

*\* Number of ordinations for 2023 and recent previous years is expected to increase in 2024 as additional records are updated by Conferences. - Please place this note at the bottom of this page rather than embedded with the chart.*

UCC ORDINATIONS (2013–2023)

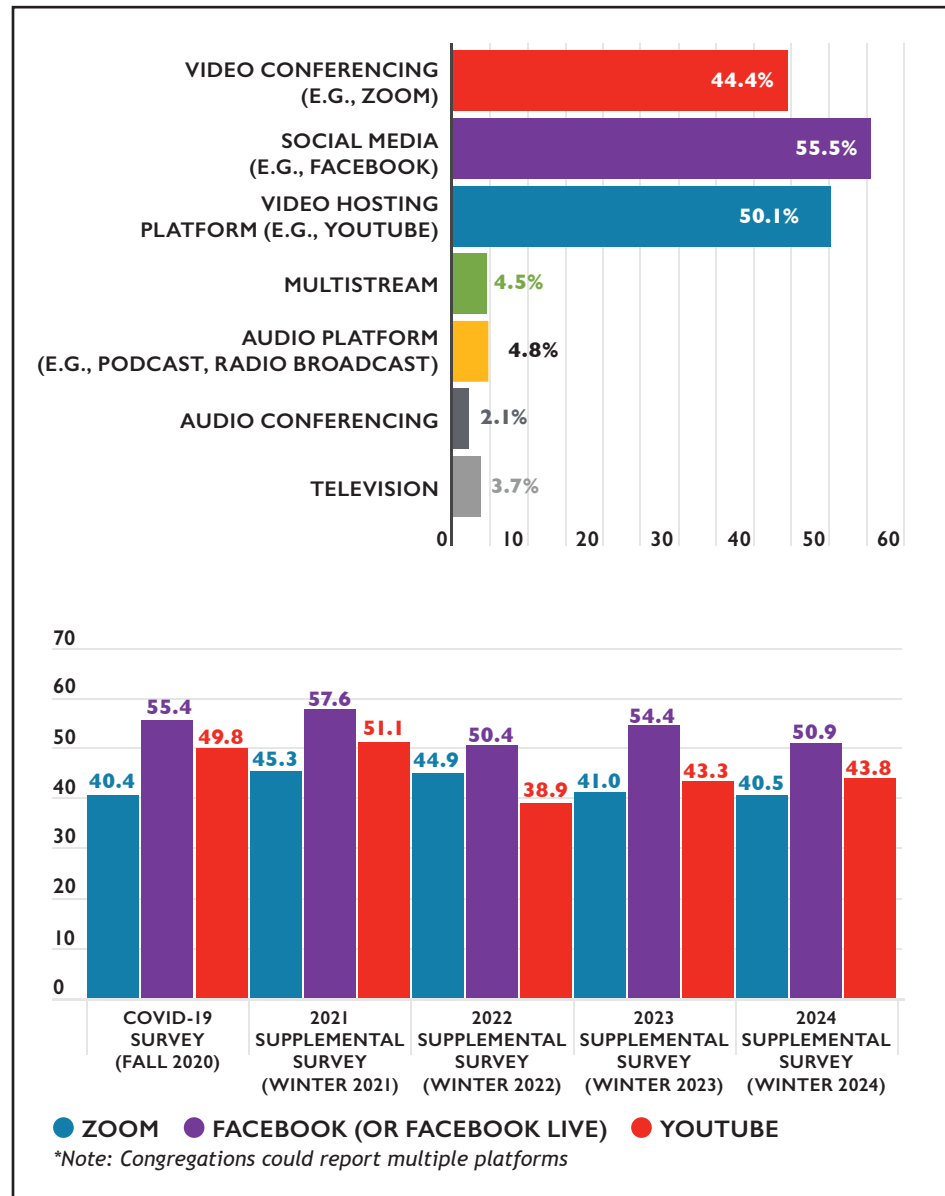


MIDS BY REGION, WITH MEMBERSHIP COMPARISON

REGION	MIDs	% MIDs	% MEMBERS
Great Lakes	153	26.4	30.2
Middle Atlantic	106	18.3	19.6
New England	112	19.3	19.9
Southern	83	14.3	7.6
Western	70	12.1	9.4
West Central	55	9.5	13.1
Non-Geographic	1	0.2	0.1

# ONLINE ENGAGEMENT AND THE CHURCH

## CONGREGATIONS' VIRTUAL WORSHIP PLATFORM USAGE



## VIRTUAL WORSHIP PREVALENCE

One of the most notable changes brought to congregational life by the COVID-19 pandemic was the expansion of virtual worship. In a survey conducted during the fall of 2020, only 9% of congregations reported offering virtual worship prior to the pandemic; by the winter of 2021, however, 91.3% of congregations reported offering virtual worship at some point during the pandemic. Recognizing that virtual worship is quickly becoming a regular feature of church life, this question was rephrased in the 2022 Supplemental Survey to ask congregations if they held virtual worship at any time in the year prior. In 2024, 78.3% of congregations responded “yes.” Among congregations who reported holding virtual worship opportunities, more than 9 out of 10 (91.5%) reported offering these opportunities every week, with an additional 4.7% reporting such opportunities were offered more than once per week.

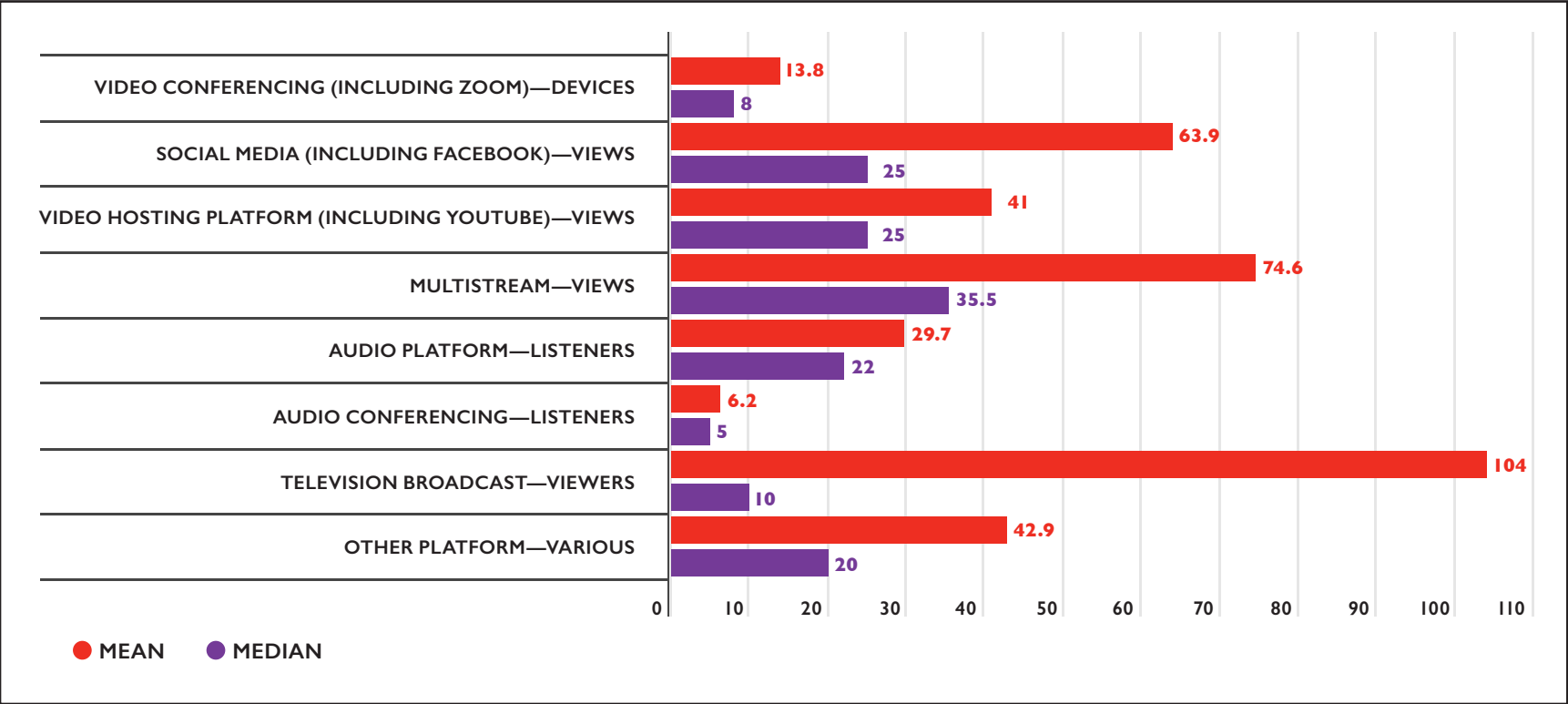
82.7% of congregations holding virtual worship reported streaming their in-person worship service. Facebook/Facebook Live, YouTube, and Zoom were the most commonly used individual platforms reported in 2023, though small numbers of churches used a wide variety of platforms to share their worship services. Even as congregations have resumed in-person worship, virtual worship has remained and will likely continue to be a common offering alongside in-person worship, as 98.0% of congregations that held virtual worship in 2023 reported that they are planning to continue to offer virtual worship in the future.

VIRTUAL WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

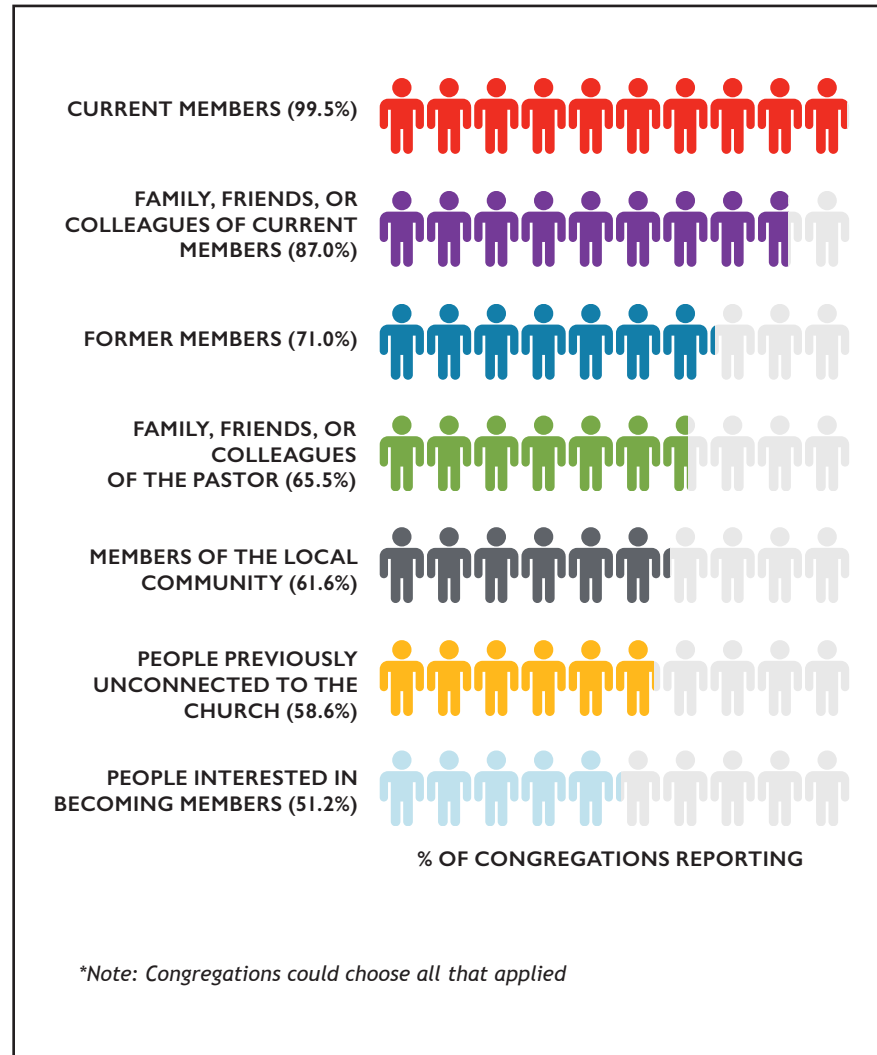
Virtual worship attendance is measured separately from in-person worship attendance because these numbers essentially measure different things. While in-person worship attendance figures represent the number of people present, online worship attendance generally represents the number of devices that have connected, as multiple people may be viewing worship on a single device, or a single device may connect multiple times. In addition, different platforms have different ways of measuring viewership, which is why attendance is measured separately for different platforms.

Given that virtual worship will continue to be a part of church life for the majority of UCC congregations, CARDD will continue to collect this data going forward. Starting in 2025, virtual worship data will be recorded alongside in-person data in the Data Hub and collected as part of the Yearbook reporting process.

VIEWERSHIP BY PLATFORM TYPE



## VIRTUAL WORSHIP ATTENDEES



## VIRTUAL WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS

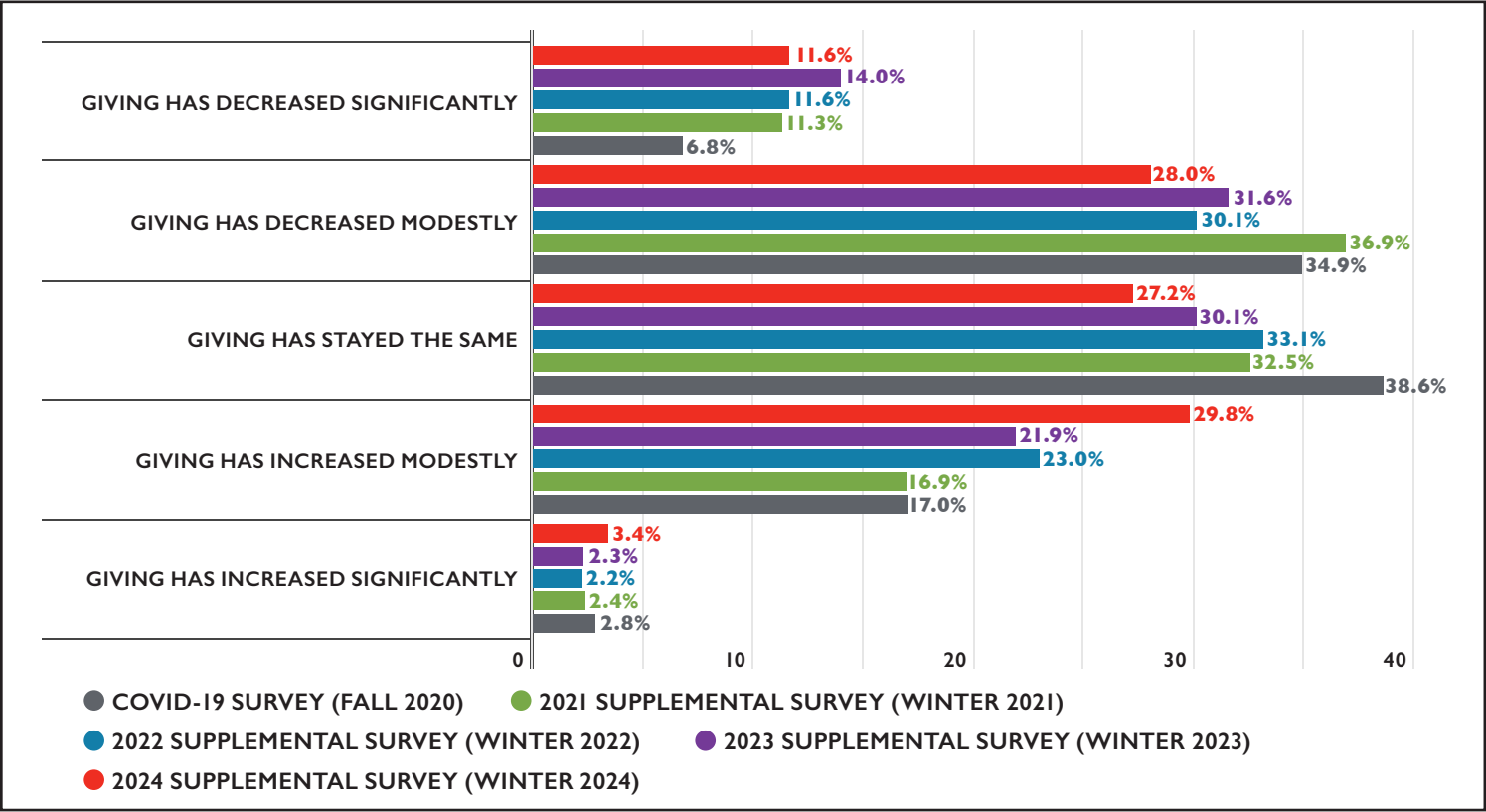
Virtual worship has enabled congregations to welcome new people to their church as well as reconnect with people whom they haven't seen in a while. Among churches holding virtual worship, nearly all congregations (99.5%) reported that current members attended their services. Family, friends, and colleagues of current members (87.0%) as well as family, friends, and colleagues of the pastor (71.0%) also commonly attended congregations' online worship services. Over half of congregations (58.6%) reported that people previously unconnected to their church were attending their online worship services and 51.2% of congregations reported that people interested in becoming members were attending online worship services, suggesting that virtual worship may be a way many congregations can and are engaging in outreach.

THE PANDEMIC IMPACT ON CONGREGATIONAL FINANCES

The pandemic has had a variety of financial implications for congregations and these implications have continued to shift over time. Since the 2023 Supplemental Survey, the proportion of congregations reporting that giving decreased significantly has gone down (decreasing from 14.0% to 11.6%), as has the proportion of congregations reporting that their giving decreased modestly (decreasing from 31.6% to 28.0%). Taken together, the proportion of congregations reporting that their giving has decreased since the pandemic began was lower in 2024 (39.6%) than in any previous year (2022 being the previous low point at 41.7%). The proportion of congregations reporting that giving has stayed the same has also decreased (from 30.1% in 2023 to 27.2%), leaving nearly a third (33.2%) of congregations reporting that their giving has actually increased modestly or significantly since the pandemic (up from 24.2% in 2022). These trends have changed directions a few times between the first COVID-19 survey in 2020 and the present supplemental survey, suggesting the impact of the pandemic and changing economic conditions on congregations’ finances is dynamic and experiences have varied widely among churches.

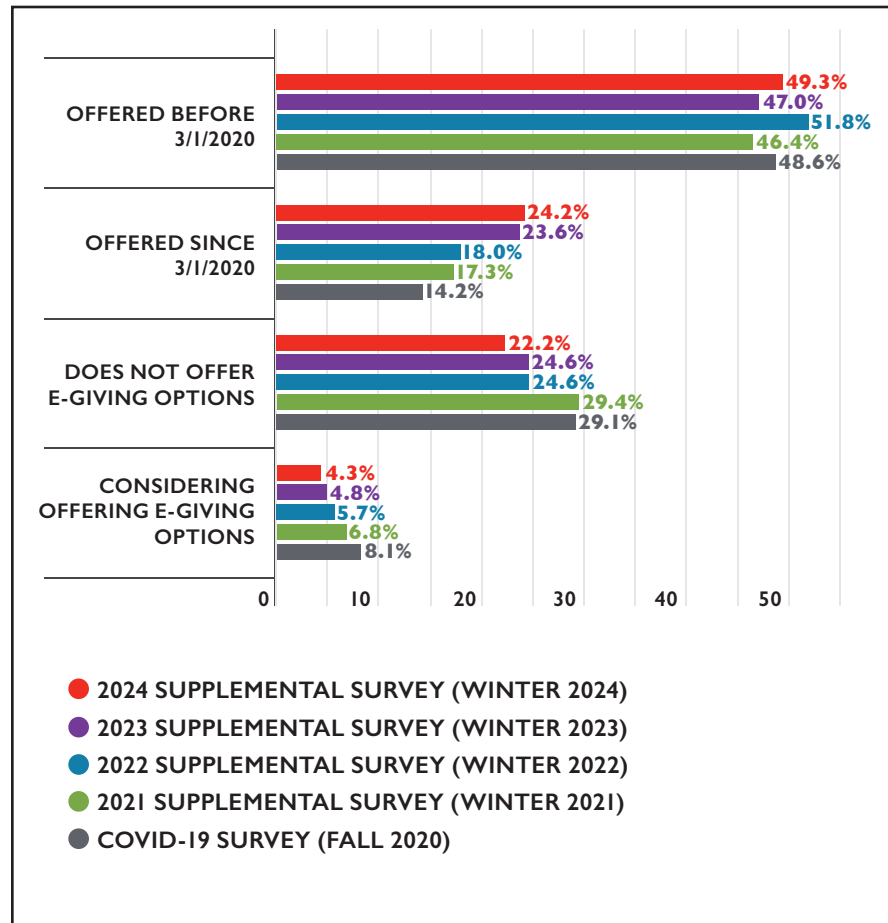
OVERALL GIVING

How has giving in your church changed since COVID-19?





## ELECTRONIC GIVING ACROSS CHURCHES



## ELECTRONIC GIVING

As congregations have expanded virtual worship opportunities, electronic giving has been a way for people to contribute financially to congregations without being physically present. Around half of congregations (49.3%) reported offering electronic giving options before the pandemic, and now nearly three quarters of congregations (73.5%) offer electronic giving. This proportion has increased since the initial COVID-19 survey in the fall of 2020, though the largest jump in usage remains that of the early pandemic months (Spring to Fall of 2020). Churches most frequently reported using Vanco/Realm, the church website, and PayPal for electronic giving; other options reported being used include Tithe.ly/Breeze, Venmo, Givelify, or payments directed by givers from individual banks.

## REFLECTIONS

What unexpected pandemic-related challenges did your congregation overcome? What surprising discoveries do you continue to carry forward into your current and future church practices? Where might you begin recalibrating previous norms to make room for your new discoveries? How have your pandemic learnings transformed your church's culture, if at all?

## SPECIAL REPORT: TRENDS IN SEARCH AND CALL

*Contributed by: The Rev. Jeff Nelson, Minister for Ministerial Calls and Transitions, Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization Team (MESA)*

The COVID pandemic has inspired greater and unique interest in its effects on the Search and Call process. Statistical reports to analyze pastoral positions from the UCC Data Hub, both concluded and newly begun during the most significant timeframe (2020-2022), have shown no clear rise or decline in these numbers, nor has the number of concluded positions been noticeably higher than the average for the previous five years.

Instead, the yearly number of pastoral transitions has revealed a downward trend for both departures and arrivals. Fewer pastoral positions have been removed each year, but an even smaller number of new positions have been added during that same time. This collectively suggests a shrinking number of available candidates for open positions.

Several caveats apply for this analysis. First, the month in which a ministry position was recorded as ending in the Data Hub only reflects when a Conference staff person was able to log that information and not necessarily when the position concluded. Second, the results could not be parsed out to account for retirements, position eliminations, deaths, and other factors.

For comparison, the number of new pastoral positions added in the Data Hub over this same period (these pastoral positions include interim and supply pastoral positions) is also included. The results are shown in the table below; the line graph gives a visual representation of the trend.

As mentioned, the number of pastoral positions removed has been trending downward. 2021—a year theorized to show a greater difference due to pandemic-related effects—shows a slowdown in positions removed but is a modest outlier.

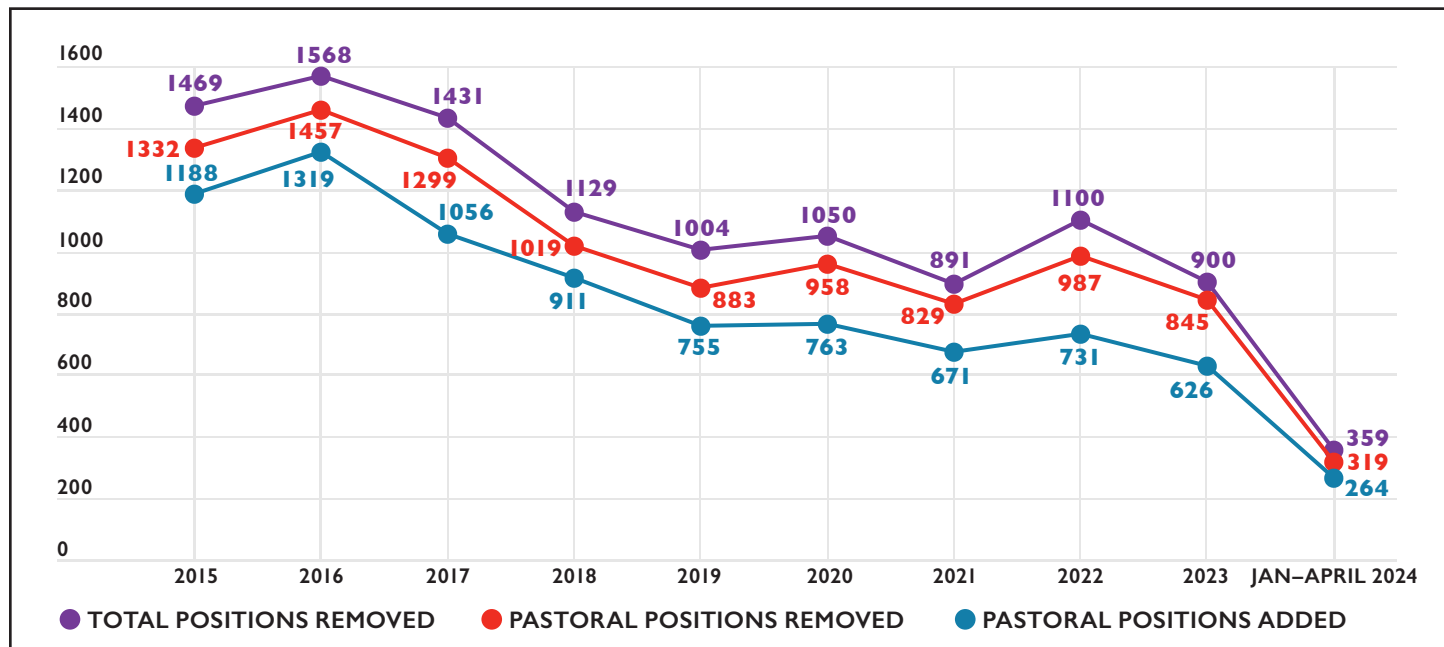
The number of new positions added has also been trending downward and has been lower than the number of removed positions every year since 2015. As pastoral positions conclude, they are not being filled in the same way or at the same rate.

There could be several reasons for this. First, there could be fewer open positions available due to downsizing or restructuring of church staff, e.g., the elimination of a position after a minister's departure. Second, the pool of candidates for local church positions may be shrinking as Members in Discernment seek non-pastoral forms of ministry or current authorized ministers opt for other employment, take a leave of absence, retire, etc. Finally, ministry settings are experiencing longer search processes due to this smaller candidate pool.

Overall, these numbers show a new reality emerging in Search and Call. Among other needs, this moment will entail greater patience and creativity as ministry settings seek to fill their open positions.

## POSITIONS ADDED AND REMOVED

YEAR	TOTAL POSITIONS REMOVED	PASTORAL POSITIONS REMOVED	PASTORAL POSITIONS ADDED
2015	1469	1332	1188
2016	1568	1457	1319
2017	1431	1299	1056
2018	1129	1019	911
2019	1004	883	755
2020	1050	958	763
2021	891	829	671
2022	1100	987	731
2023	900	845	626
January 2024—April 2024	359	319	264



## SPECIAL REPORT: “NEW FRAMEWORK FOR GIVING” INCREASES FLOW OF GIFTS: IMPACT OF 2017 GENERAL SYNOD RESOLUTION ON GIVING

*Contributed by: The Rev. Andy DeBraber, UCC Director of Philanthropy*

In 2017 General Synod adopted a resolution to retire the previous “Pattern of Giving” and replace it with “A New Framework for Covenantal Giving and Implementing Fundraising Best Practices.” Whereas previously the National Setting of the UCC was generally prohibited from asking individuals directly for gifts, the “New Ecology” called for a donor-centered approach, opening the door for the National Setting to invite greater individual giving.<sup>1</sup>

One goal of this action was to make up for the steady decline in recent decades of Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM) gifts. OCWM gifts are given by churches and conferences to the National Setting in four areas:

- Basic Support, which accounts for approximately 20% of the UCC National Ministries operating budget (Basic Support is 60% of “OCWM Giving” in chart below)
- One Great Hour of Sharing (23% of “OCWM Giving” in chart below)
- Strengthen the Church (4% of “OCWM Giving” in chart below)
- Neighbors in Need (13% of “OCWM Giving” in chart below)

The fifth area of OCWM giving is the Christmas Fund/Veterans of the Cross, which is administered by the Pension Boards UCC, and is not included in this report since many gifts go directly to the Pension Boards.

Now for the good news! The resolution has made a major difference in the life of the National Ministries of the UCC.

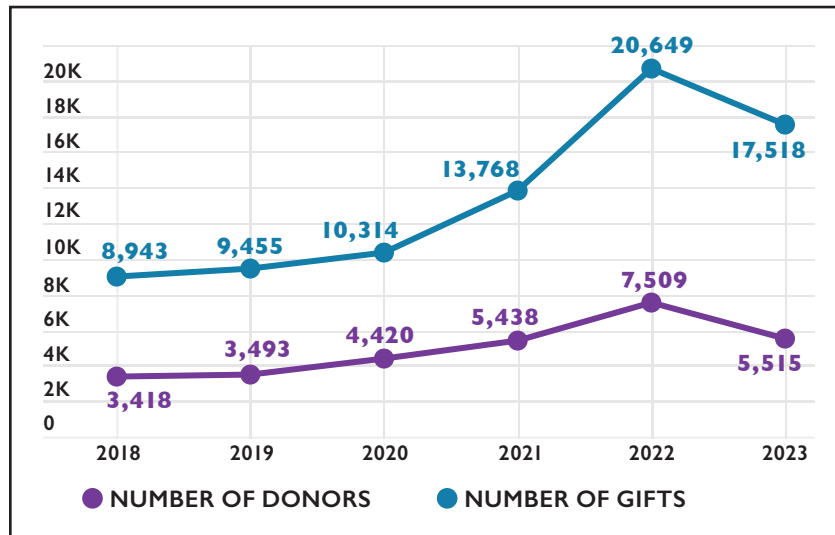
As you can see from the charts below, over the six years since the resolution, the number of donors, the number of gifts, and the total given by individuals has grown significantly:

- From 3,418 donors to a high of 7,509 in 2022
- From 8943 gifts to a high of 20,649 in 2022
- From total giving of \$1.23M to a high of \$2.78M in 2022

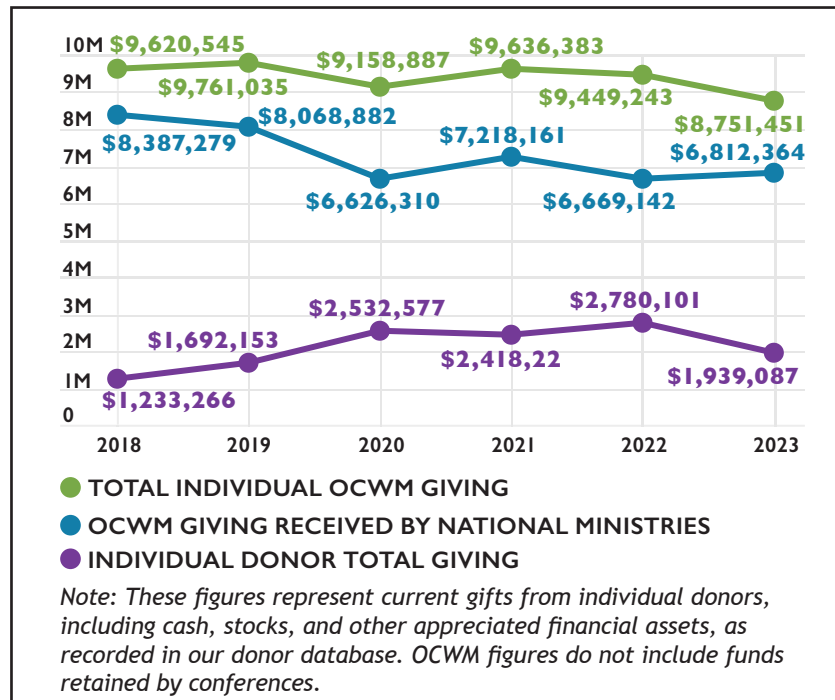
A major outpouring of generous support from individuals to the UCC Ukraine relief efforts created the large bump in 2022—and demonstrates the continued potential for growth. However, even omitting 2022, the number of donors and gifts continued to increase from 2021 to 2023.

<sup>1</sup>General Synod 31 in 2017 adopted “A Resolution Declaring the Work of the Pattern of Giving in the United Church of Christ Complete and on Proposing a New Framework for Covenantal Giving and Implementing Fundraising Best Practices,” based on work done the previous biennium by the Giving Task Force, which resulted in a report titled “A New Ecology of Generosity.”

## COUNT OF DONORS AND GIFTS BY YEAR



## GIVING AMOUNTS BY YEAR



When we combine the increasing individual giving to the declining giving to the four areas of OCWM, we see that the total has remained steady, between \$8.75M and \$9.76M. A notable difference in this for the National Setting is that while OCWM Basic Support (\$4M-\$5M from 2018-2023) is used as undesignated operational funding, only about 20% of individual giving comes as undesignated operational funding to use wherever needed. The other 80% of individual giving is designated to specific ministry areas or campaigns.

Three areas of fundraising best practices that have contributed to these increases are:

- Several appeals sent by mail or email every year for both general operating funds and for specific ministries
- The hiring of Generosity Officers to cultivate major gifts
- Reporting back to those who give on the difference they made in the church and the world

In addition, the Philanthropy team has led hundreds of church and conference leaders over the past six years through an in-depth seminar titled “Cultivating Generous Congregations,” in partnership with the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving.

As we move forward, a plan to promote planned giving is being added to the best practices listed above, as is an emphasis on creating easier paths for donors to make gifts from appreciated assets, including stocks, individual retirement accounts, and donor advised funds.

We do all of this in covenant, working together toward a just world for all, united in Christ’s love!

# OUR CHURCH’S WIDER MISSION: HISTORIC GIVING PROGRAM OF THE UCC IS KEY DRIVER OF VITALITY

Contributed by: The Rev. Dr. Elena Larssen

‘Our Church’s Wider Mission’ is the historic funding program of the UCC.

In the UCC, congregations make voluntary financial gifts to Conferences, and Conferences budget a gift to the National Ministries. As a United and Uniting Church within the Protestant Reformed tradition, our church makes and maintains shared commitments instead of a culture of ‘payment’ and ‘patronage.’ Nicknamed OCWM, *Our Church’s Wider Mission* is our system of financial support for the wider church *beyond* the local congregation.

OCWM is an expression of the theology of covenant that thrives in our UCC ecclesiology and polity; as MESA leader Rev. Tara Barber often mentions, “*covenant holds both autonomy and accountability.*” This theology of interdependence is especially visible in the OCWM program, which generates as much as 18 million dollars annually for the wider church (meaning Conferences, Associations where they exist, and National Ministries).

OCWM is a key driver of ministry, including Basic Support and the annual Special Mission Offerings: The Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross, Neighbors in Need, One Great Hour of Sharing, and Strengthen the Church. The OCWM program has not diminished in importance as individual donors have increasingly engaged directly with the National Ministries (*see Andy De Braber’s report for more details on member-donor engagement*).

As seen in the table, the Conferences retain an estimated **\$12,238,262.00** of Basic Support funds across all Conferences for their internal operations, remitting approximately four million to the National Ministries.

2023 OUR CHURCH’S WIDER MISSION

GIVING CATEGORY	GIVEN BY CONGREGATIONS ESTIMATED DUE TO VOLUNTARY REPORTING PRACTICES	RECEIVED BY NATIONAL ACTUAL DOLLARS RECORDED BY NATIONAL
Basic Support (regular tithing/gifting)	\$16,193,257.00	\$3,954,995.00
Strengthen the Church (Special offering)	\$461,516.00	\$295,374.00

## RECENT SUPPLEMENTAL SURVEY FINDINGS

### How Does that Happen?

Local Churches of the UCC predominately budget their contribution (73.24%), and some take a special Sunday morning offering (30.83%), either by itself or in addition to the budgeted gift.

### Learning about OCWM

A large majority—88%—educate their members about OCWM, with the most popular teaching methods include ‘sermons and mission moments’ and ‘newsletter articles;’ 38% of respondents cited Association or Conference meetings as good teaching sources and 37% rely on the trusty ‘back of the bulletin’ updates. Both social media (27%) and UCC News/Newsletters (21%) are popular, as well.

### What Giving Matters Most to our Churches?

When asked what kind of OCWM giving is most important, 41% cited our UCC Special Offerings (The annual Special Mission Offerings: The Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross, Neighbors in Need, One Great Hour of Sharing, and Strengthen the Church) and 32% cited Basic Support. But the generous heart of the UCC was shown in the comments section, where many wrote in to say: “All giving is important.”

The United Church of Christ is a generous church, and all gifts are blessings for the ministry of the Gospel among us. This report is submitted with prayerful gratitude for all who practice a spirituality of giving in our beloved UCC.



## SPECIAL REPORT: 2023 WASHINGTON D.C. OFFICE ACTION ALERTS

*Contributed by: Jessica Quinn, Former Communications Specialist for the Washington D.C. Office*

Each week, targeted action alerts are sent out to advocates across the country through the UCC's Justice and Peace Action Network (JPANet). In 2023, the Washington D.C. Office sent out 34 alerts on a wide range of issues. Advocates who took action through our system sent direct emails and tweets to their legislators using language written by UCC staff.

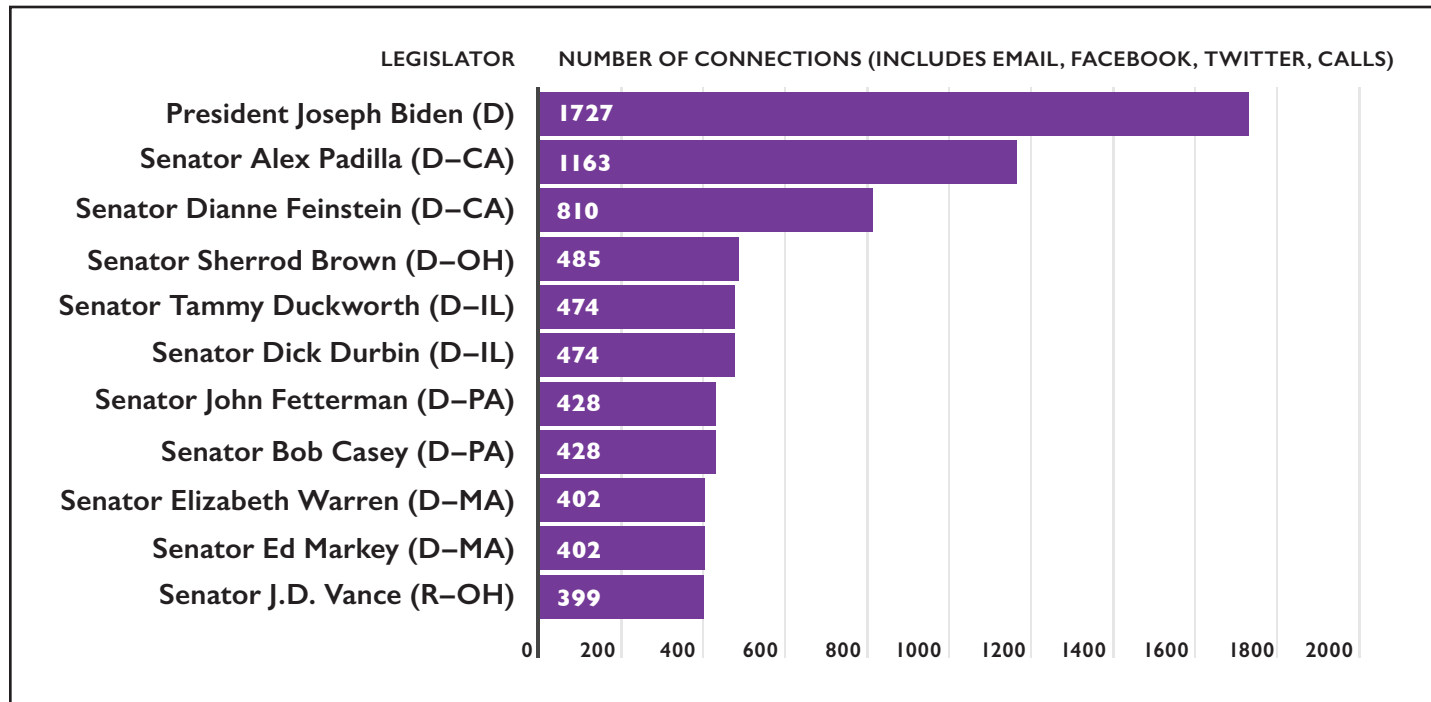
Action alerts on the issues of calling for a ceasefire and Just Peace in Gaza, supporting the rights of transgender individuals, and legislation to address gun violence had the highest level of advocate support and the most messages sent to legislators. Specifically on the topic of a ceasefire and calling for Just Peace in Palestine and Israel, 1,265 advocates took action, sending an impressive 5,172 messages to Congress and the Administration. Related to advocacy on rights for transgender people, 1,118 advocates sent 2,872 messages to legislators calling for passage of a Trans Bill of Rights and stronger discrimination protection for trans and all LGBTQ+ identified people. Other topics that showed high engagement from advocates were voting rights and the call to remove Cuba from the state sponsors of terrorism list.

### 2023 ACTION ALERT ISSUES

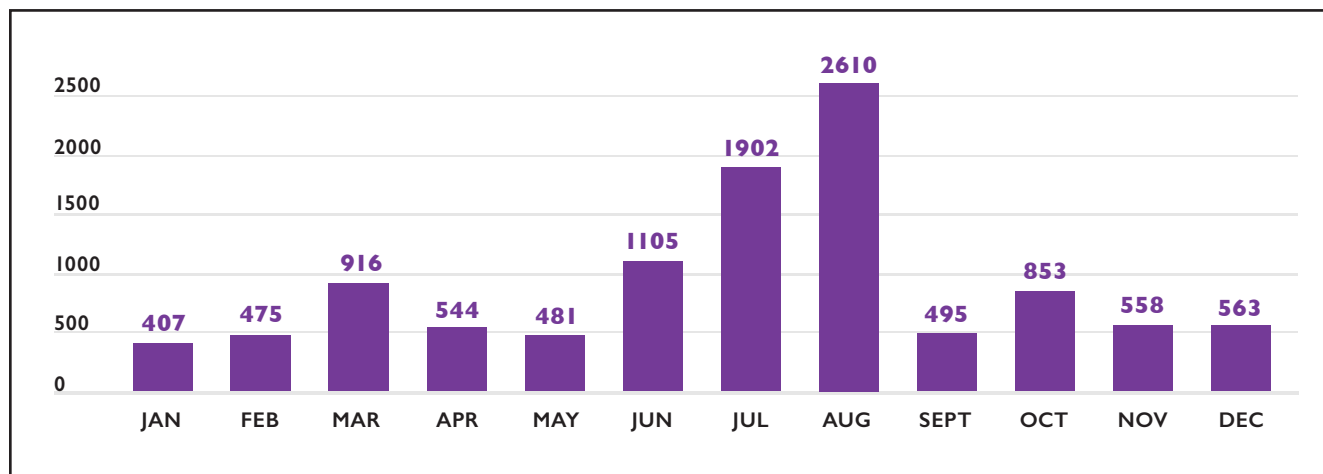
ACTION ALERT ISSUES—2023	# OF ADVOCATES BY ISSUE	# MESSAGES SENT TO LEGISLATORS
Ceasefire & Just Peace in Middle East (3 alerts)	1,265	5,172
Transgender Rights (3 Alerts)	1,118	2,872
Gun Legislation (4 alerts)	1,092	4,139
Voting Rights (3 alerts)	478	805
Clean Budget (2 alerts)	455	1,531
Reproductive Rights/Abortion Access (2 alerts)	413	1,600
Cuba	270	1,034
Policing Reform	269	1,005
Close Guantanamo	260	323
Debt Ceiling	250	288
Nuclear Weapon Abolition	241	340
Recovering America's Wildlife Act	232	326
No Asylum Ban	223	235
Criminal Justice Reform—RESTORE Act	215	276
Environmental Justice for All Act	212	915
WIC Funding	211	808
Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2023	203	953
Solitary	194	248
Farm Bill	183	620
Reuniting Immigrant Families	162	192
Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine	155	539
Support Syria After Earthquake	149	196
Philippine Human Rights Act	149	543



## TOP LEGISLATOR CONNECTIONS IN 2023



## ADVOCATE ACTIVITY IN 2023 BY MONTH



UCC PROGRAMMATIC WORK

SPECIAL REPORT: GLOBAL MINISTRIES PARTNER PRIORITIES:  
2023 ACTION ALERT ISSUES

Contributed by: Jessica Quinn, Former Communications Specialist for the Washington D.C. Office

In 2023, there were 19 alerts relating to global issues, informed by our Global Ministries (UCC and Disciples) partners. These alerts include the 3rd Thursday alerts for a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel. Advocates who took action through our system sent emails and tweets directly to their representatives using language written by UCC staff.

The alerts that had the most engagement from advocates were those on calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, allowing humanitarian aid to access the region, and for an end to military aid to Israel. In total, 1,855 advocates sent 7,356 messages to Congress and the Administration on the conflict in Palestine and Israel.

2023 GLOBAL MINISTRY ACTION ALERT ISSUES

GLOBAL MINISTRY ACTION ALERT ISSUES—2023	# OF ADVOCATES BY ISSUE	# MESSAGES SENT TO LEGISLATORS
Call for Ceasefire, Just Peace (4 alerts)	1,374	5,872
Human Rights for Palestinians (5 alerts)	350	1,061
Cuba	270	1,034
Nuclear Weapon Abolition	241	340
Support Syria After Earthquake (2 alerts)	189	396
Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine	155	539
Philippines Human Rights Act	149	543
No Military Aid to Israel (4 alerts)	133	345

## UCC PROGRAMMATIC WORK

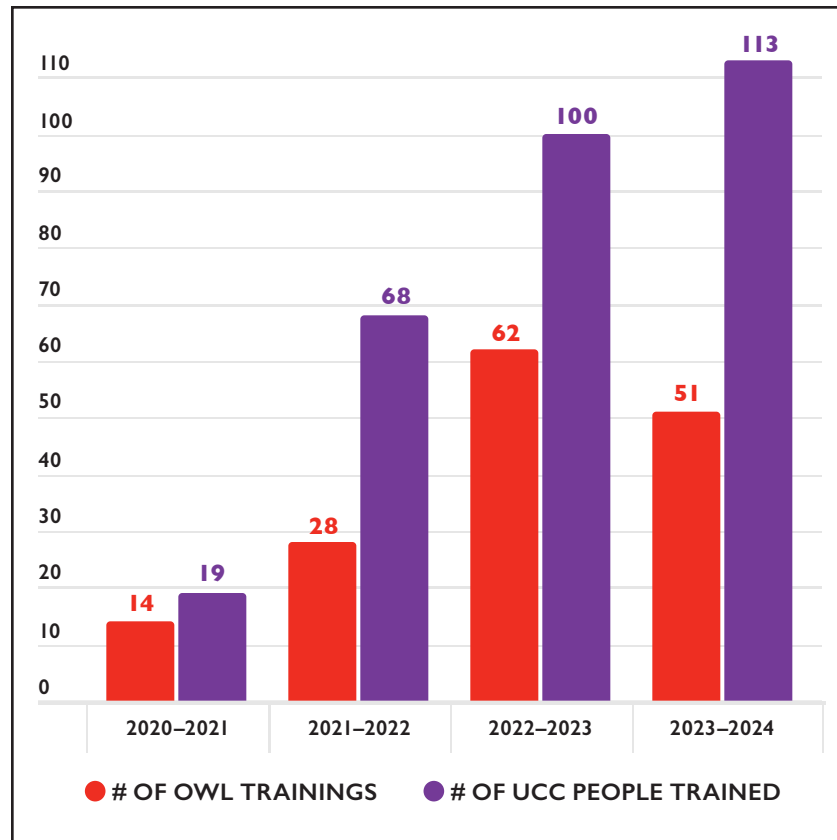
**SPECIAL REPORT: OUR WHOLE LIVES/SEXUALITY AND OUR FAITH**

*Contributed by: Rev. Amy Johnson, UCC Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice*

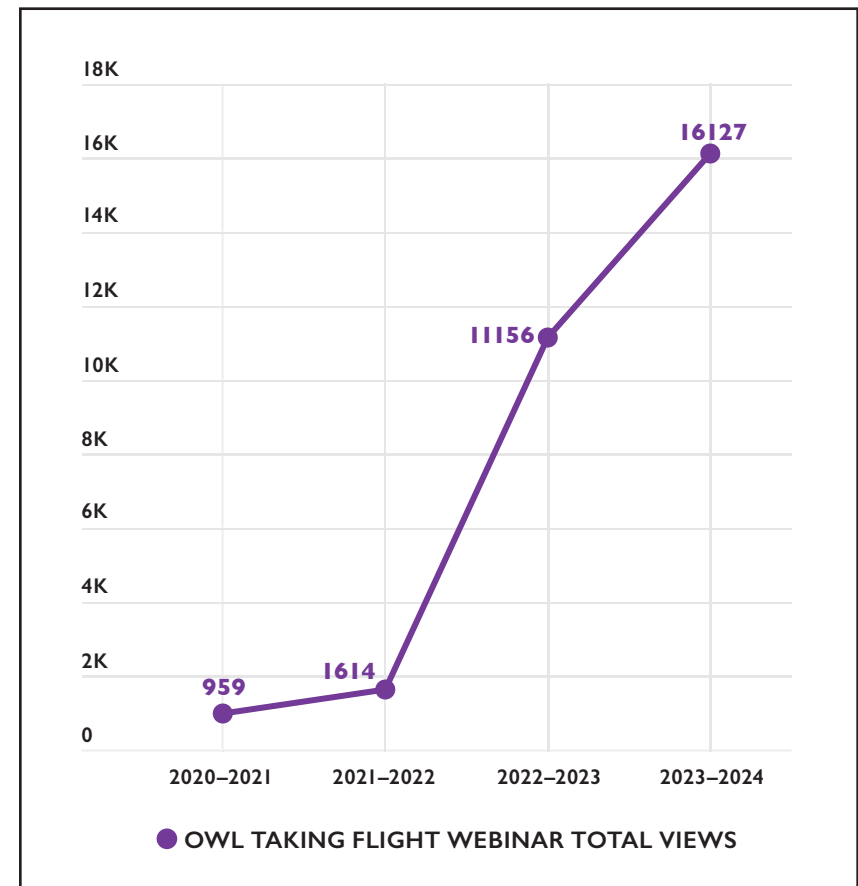
Our Whole Lives & Sexuality and Our Faith are developed and maintained by a partnership between the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Association. We work together to create and update curricula, train and equip approved trainers to train facilitators, and create and update the facilitator training process.

Our Whole Lives in-person trainings continue to be strong. Monthly Our Whole Lives webinars continue to be popular, and the recordings are accessed after their live presentation.

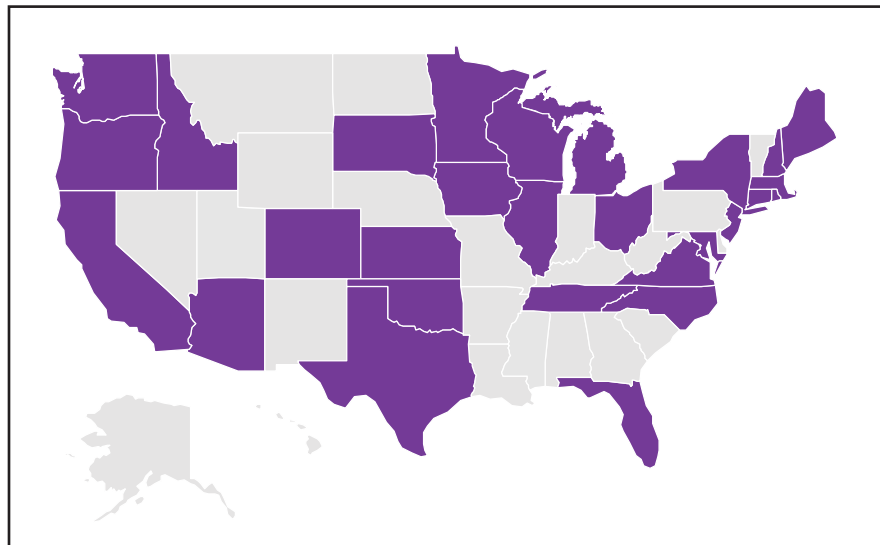
### TRAININGS AND UCC PERSONS TRAINED OVER TIME



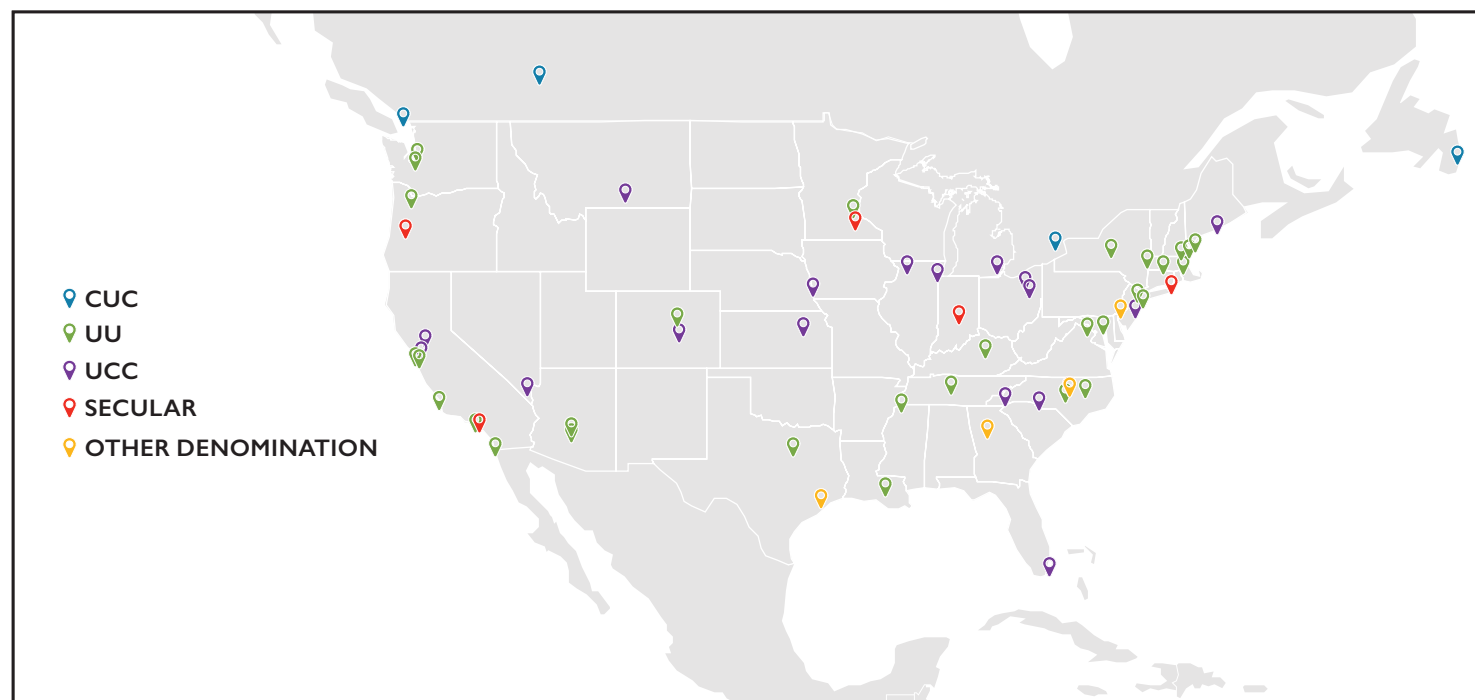
### OWL TAKING FLIGHT WEBINAR TOTAL VIEWS



STATES WHERE UCC PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TRAINED IN OUR WHOLE LIVES AT ANY LEVEL FROM 6/2023–5/2024



## APPROVED OWL TRAINERS WHO LEAD OWL TRAININGS IN NORTH AMERICA



## MONTHLY OUR WHOLE LIVES: TAKING FLIGHT WEBINARS

- Topics have included:
  - Raising Kids Beyond the Binary
  - Partnership with SIECUS for Sex Ed for All Month
  - Reproductive Justice Advocates
  - Interviews with authors Airlie Anderson (Neither) and Debby Herbenick (Yes, Your Kid)
  - Reclaiming Sexual Identity Through Carnival (decolonizing sexuality)
  - LGBTQ and Aging
  - Parent Orientations for Our Whole Lives Programs
  - Trans Action, featuring ministries serving trans beloved in the UCC and UUA
- The number of cumulative views continues to increase with 16,127 the total as of this report. Most watched are:
  - Racial Justice webinar (now required for all OWL training participants)
  - Consensual Non-Monogamy and Faith
  - Sex on Wednesday
  - Gender and Related Language
  - Parents and Caregivers as Sexuality Educators
- OWL Trainings
  - There were 51 total trainings between 6/2023 and 5/2024 (*See chart on p. 45*)
  - 113 UCC people were trained in these trainings (*See chart on p. 45*)
  - These 113 people are in 28 different US states (*See map on p. 46*)
- Special Initiatives:
  - Increased the number of UCC OWL Trainers in 2024 (added 9 new UCC trainers in SD, SC, NJ, CA, OH, and CO—see *map on p. 46*)
  - Sexuality and Our Faith visuals revision in process
  - Our Whole Lives for Grades K-1, UCC edition, published

UCC PROGRAMMATIC WORK

SPECIAL REPORT: INCREASING ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS IN THE UCC

Contributed by: The Rev. Dr. Brooks Berndt, Environmental Justice Minister, Education for Faithful Action Ministries

The National Setting of the United Church of Christ now keeps annually updated lists of churches that have [divested from fossil fuels](#), [installed solar panels](#), or achieved a designation as a [Creation Justice Church](#). In each of these areas, we are witnessing steady increases in environmental commitments. Over the previous year, we saw a 16 percent increase in solar churches, a 21 percent increase in Creation Justice Churches, and a 56 percent increase in divested churches. As a result, there are now 67 Creation Justice Churches, 184 solar churches, and 205 divested churches.

In the case of solar churches and divested churches, some of the increase can be attributed to the new inclusion of solar and divestment questions in the UCC’s annual survey of churches. At the same time, there are signs that we are on the cusp of a substantial surge in solar churches in the UCC. The Inflation Reduction Act has made it possible for nonprofit organizations such as churches to receive direct payments from the federal government for installing solar panels. The federal government will pay for at least 30% of the cost of a solar installation, if not 40 to 50%, depending upon where a church is located and whether domestically produced materials are used. (Technically, one could have 80% of a solar installation covered, if one additionally received funds through competitive processes.)

Today, churches can no longer afford to NOT go solar. Going solar will reduce one’s electrical bill, and financial barriers to going solar have essentially been removed. The UCC Cornerstone Fund, for example, offers discounted loans that can enable churches to go solar, while reducing their overall costs.

The UCC Cornerstone Fund’s annual numbers point to the trend of increasing environmental commitments. For example, from 2023 to 2024, it is projected that the UCC Cornerstone Fund will see a 200% increase in loans for solar projects.

CORNERSTONE CREATION CARE LENDING  
2022–2024 LOANS APPROVED

2024 APPROVED THROUGH JUNE 30 <sup>TH</sup>	# OF LOANS	\$ LOANS
Solar	6	\$601,500.00
Other Energy Projects	2	\$125,000.00
2024 Pipeline		
Solar	6	\$995,000.00
Other Energy Projects	1	\$1,200,000.00
2023 Approved		
Solar	4	\$4,336,589.00
Other Energy Projects	8	\$2,134,470.00
2022 Approved		
Solar	3	\$1,816,629.00
Other Energy Projects	4	\$302,000.00
2022–2024 Totals		
Total Solar	19	\$7,749,718.00
Total Other Energy	15	\$3,761,470.00
Total Energy Related	34	\$11,511,188.00

The UCC Cornerstone Fund also provides loans for other energy related projects such as heat pumps and energy efficient boilers. By choosing appliances that do not rely on fossil fuels or that increase energy efficiency, churches make important environmental commitments. The chart below details loan approvals and loan proposals in the pipeline for 2022-2024 for both solar and other energy-related projects. Altogether, these loans amount to \$11,511,188. In the UCC, we are literally investing in a brighter future with our increased environmental commitments.

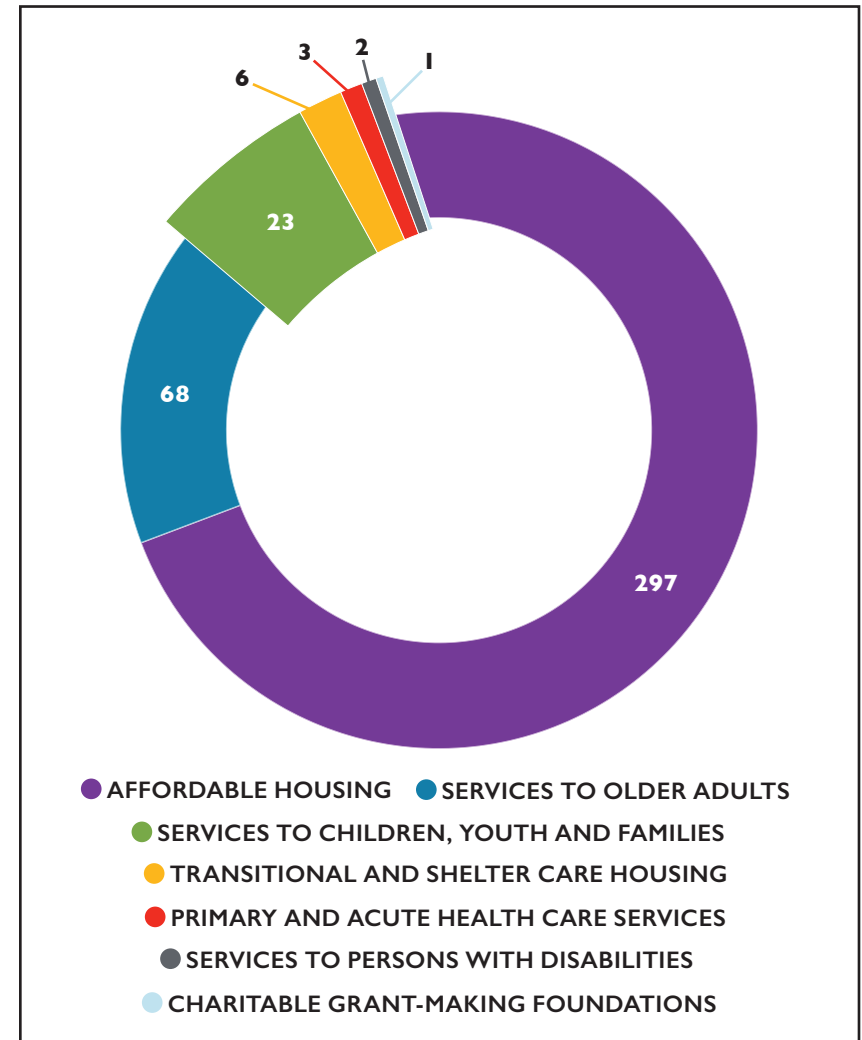
## REPORTS FROM AFFILIATED MINISTRIES

**SPECIAL REPORT: HIGHLIGHTS ON COUNCIL FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE MINISTRIES (CHHSM)***Contributed by: Council for Health and Human Service Ministries (CHHSM)*

Each year, we catalog the incredible impact that CHHSM'S 73 corporate members make together toward creating a more just, caring and compassionate world as they do the healing and service ministry of Jesus Christ through 400 facilities and programs affiliated with the United Church of Christ.

In 2023, CHHSM ministries:

- Served 3 million individuals including: 15,281 children; 11,579 youth; 18,541 families; 36,564 older adults; 1,549 veterans; and provided ambulatory health care to over 2.2 million people and acute care to 720,800 people
- Operated 35,044 residential units including: 21,506 affordable housing units; 8,071 independent living units; and 2,528 assisted living units
- Operated facilities with 5,347 beds providing acute, skilled nursing, and memory care
- Provided residential and non-residential services to over 350 people with developmental disabilities
- Utilized 18,409 volunteers who provided 233,272 hours of service
- Provided \$1.1 billion in uncompensated and charity care
- Received \$62.5 million in charitable contributions
- Expended \$13.4 billion for operations with revenues of \$14.2 billion
- Maintained capital assets with a replacement value of \$15.3 billion
- Employed 85,608 people

**CHHSM SERVICE CATEGORIES BY MEMBERS, FACILITIES, OR PROGRAMS**

REPORTS FROM AFFILIATED MINISTRIES

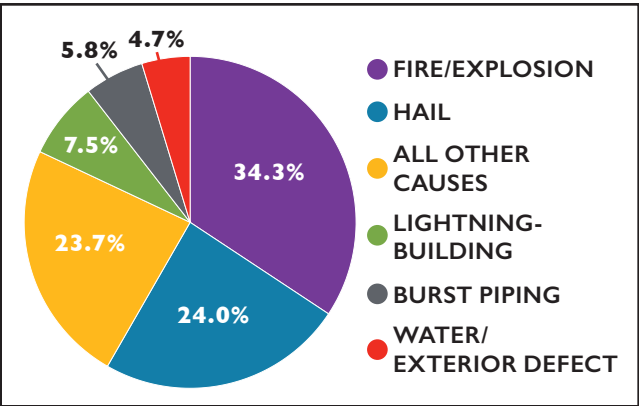
SPECIAL REPORT: INSURANCE BOARD’S CLAIM TRENDS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

Contributed by: Insurance Board

In 2023, the year saw a concerning surge in weather and climate disasters, with 28 incidents recorded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, costing at least \$92.9 billion worldwide. Insurance Board heightened its focus on preventing water damage and equipping ministries to respond effectively to natural disasters. While some disasters are beyond control, mitigating preventable incidents or reducing their severity is crucial to minimizing losses. To accomplish this, Insurance Board continued its deployment of water sensor technology to eligible participating ministries, enabling timely notifications to avert water damage. Additionally, proactive alerts regarding winter storms and cold watches were issued. In times of disaster, Insurance Board provided support by handling claims for impacted ministries. The statistical report for 2023 summarizes the claims observed and offers recommendations for ministries to prevent future avoidable claims.

In 2023, weather-related losses due to fire, hail, and lightning dominated the top five property claim causes. Notably, a single wildfire event, a devastating firestorm in Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii, accounted for the majority of fire claims. This event alone resulted in over \$9.5 million in claim dollars, with the largest loss exceeding \$4.9 million. Additionally, water damage from burst pipes and water-exterior defects contributed to 91 claims in 2023. These figures underscore the significant financial impact of weather-related incidents on properties. To safeguard against such losses, it’s crucial for ministries to prioritize preventive measures and disaster preparedness.

PROPERTY TOP 5 CAUSE PERCENTAGE (BASED ON INCURRED DOLLARS)



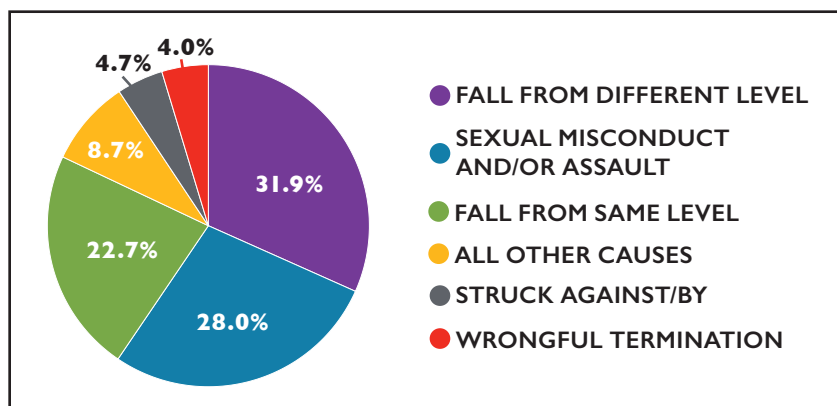
PROPERTY TOP 5 CLAIM TRENDS

CAUSE	CLAIM COUNT	INCURRED DOLLARS	PAID DOLLARS	AVERAGE INCURRED DOLLARS	LARGEST LOSS
Fire/Explosion	11	\$10,661,530.00	\$9,525,627.01	\$969,230.00	\$4,975,000.00
Hail	54	\$7,477,640.00	\$3,753,756.91	\$138,474.81	\$4,100,000.00
Lightning-Building	20	\$2,319,855.00	\$1,631,839.16	\$115,992.75	\$1,785,000.00
Burst Piping	32	\$1,817,774.00	\$1,441,696.78	\$56,805.44	\$370,000.00
Burst Piping	59	\$1,472,947.00	\$989,427.96	\$24,965.20	\$317,000.00

Note: Represents 76.31% of the \$31,123,562.00 Dollars



### GENERAL LIABILITY TOP 5 CAUSE VALUES (BASED ON INCURRED DOLLARS)



In 2023, slip and fall claims remained the most frequent liability issue, accounting for 44 incidents in total highlighting the pervasive nature of the problem. Given these challenges, Insurance Board is committed to empowering ministries with the necessary resources to prevent slip and falls. Meanwhile, claims related to sexual misconduct (SML) emerged as the most financially burdensome, with an average cost per claim exceeding \$96,000 and the largest claim reaching \$425,000. Additionally, in addressing abuse prevention, we have continued our partnership with Praesidium, the nation's foremost provider in this field. Together, we are dedicated to ensuring the safety and well-being of the communities we serve.

As a financial ministry, Insurance Board is committed to helping churches reduce risk. When one church has a massive claim, it can affect all churches across the program. Therefore, Insurance Board focuses on the hazards we believe can be prevented or mitigated; we also serve our ministries by being there for them when disaster strikes.

### GENERAL LIABILITY TOP 5 CLAIM TRENDS

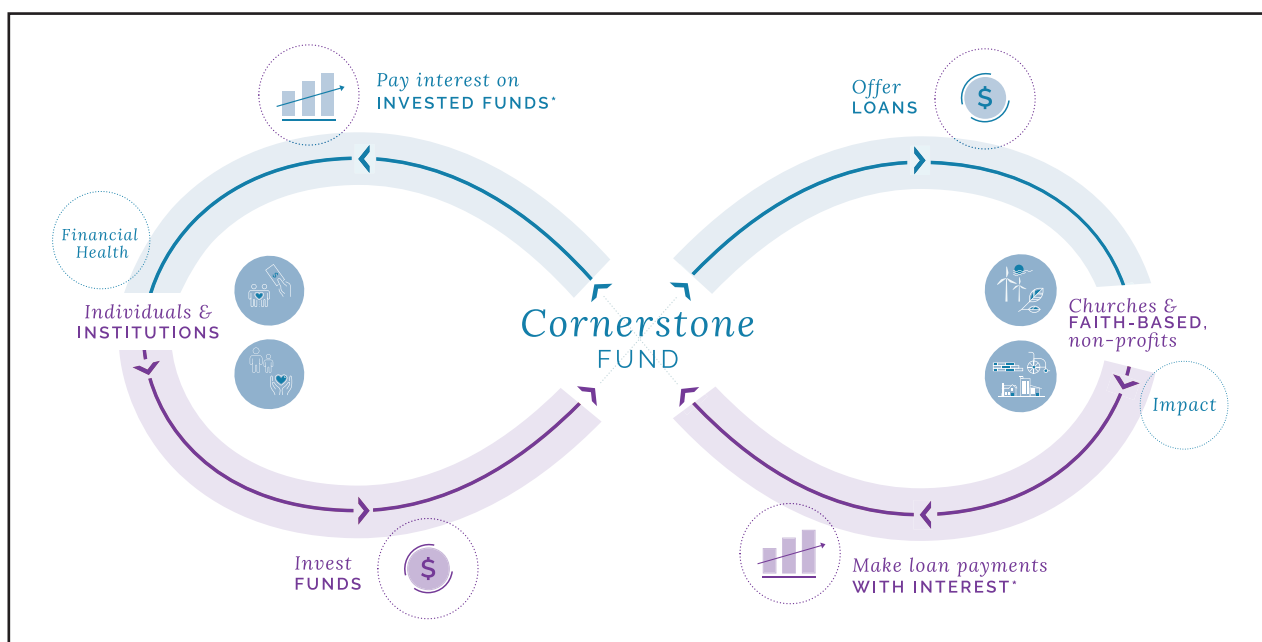
CAUSE	CLAIM COUNT	INCURRED DOLLARS	PAID DOLLARS	AVERAGE INCURRED DOLLARS	LARGEST LOSS
Fall From Different Level	16	\$986,979.00	\$50,443.14	\$61,686.19	\$555,000.00
Sexual Misconduct and/or Assault	9	\$866,025.00	\$36,016.02	\$96,225.00	\$425,000.00
Fall From Same Level	28	\$702,503.00	\$42,665.88	\$25,089.39	\$360,000.00
Struck Against/By	8	\$146,398.00	\$17,367.23	\$18,299.75	\$66,000.00
Wrongful Termination	2	\$125,000.00	\$11,962.38	\$62,500.00	\$65,000.00
Note: Represents 91.26% of the \$3,097624.00 Dollars					

## SPECIAL REPORT: 2023 CORNERSTONE FUND IMPACTS

*Contributed by: Cornerstone Fund*

2023 was indeed a monumental year for the Fund. Not only did we close 37 new loans, but we also increased our already formidable lending to churches of color and immigrant churches, in line with our Racial Equity Plan. Equally in 2023, we furthered on our commitment to Creation Care and with the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, we redoubled our efforts in educating churches and other faith-based organizations on the benefits of going solar, both in terms of reducing their carbon footprint and generating savings.

On the Cornerstone Fund Investment front, in the face of a very competitive rate environment, we increased our net investments by nearly \$7.5 million. As we illustrate in the figure below, this is important because our investors, both individuals and institutions, provide the capital that enables us to support projects that do everything from enhancing a spiritual home, to feeding the hungry, to providing a safe space for working, living, healing or other daily activities. This is the essence of “The Cornerstone Difference.”



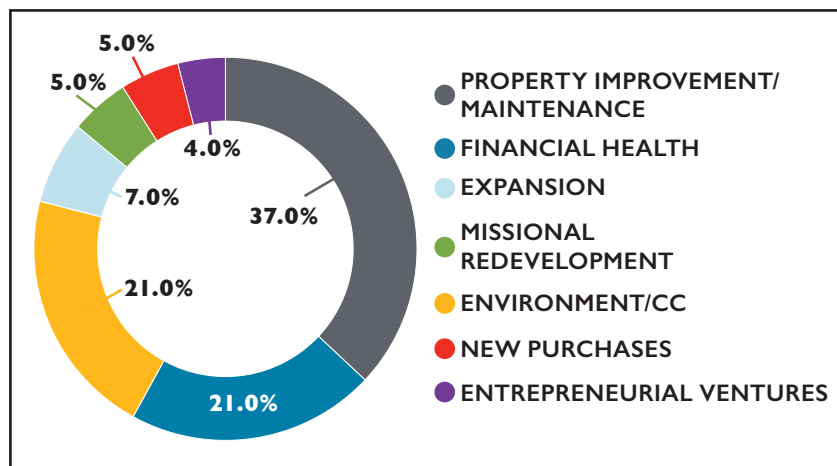
In 2023, we actively participated in the 34<sup>th</sup> General Synod of the United Church of Christ, where we enjoyed fellowship with friends from all across the country, launched our new LGBTQIA+ Giving Bonus, and debuted our new Fund logo and brand identity. The logo itself is said to resemble a seed emerging from the ground, fed by five streams, much like the five streams that formed the United Church of Christ. For those of us that work at the Cornerstone Fund, we see that sprouting seed as a growing love for the many projects we have the privilege of financing.

Our work goes beyond the United Church of Christ, and we have engaged with missionally aligned non-denominational or other faith tradition-based entities to honor our Mission of “Joining together in faith to invest in and build Community,” and on a path to realizing our Vision of “Serving as a catalyst for ministries to thrive.”

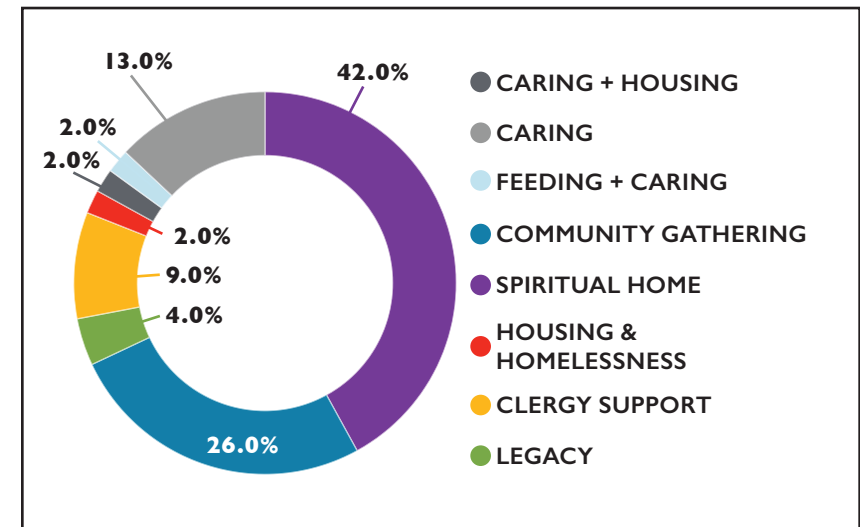
### Key Statistics

- Investment Funds
  - \$111,012,661 total investment portfolio
  - 36% of investors were individuals, 64% institutions
  - 88% of investors renewed their investment in 2023
- Loans
  - 283 active loans, totaling \$121,109,472
  - 37 loans were approved in 2023, totaling \$33,191,264
  - 18 of 37 projects featured anticipated income or budgetary savings for borrowers
  - The median estimated income/savings for 2023 projects was \$37,500

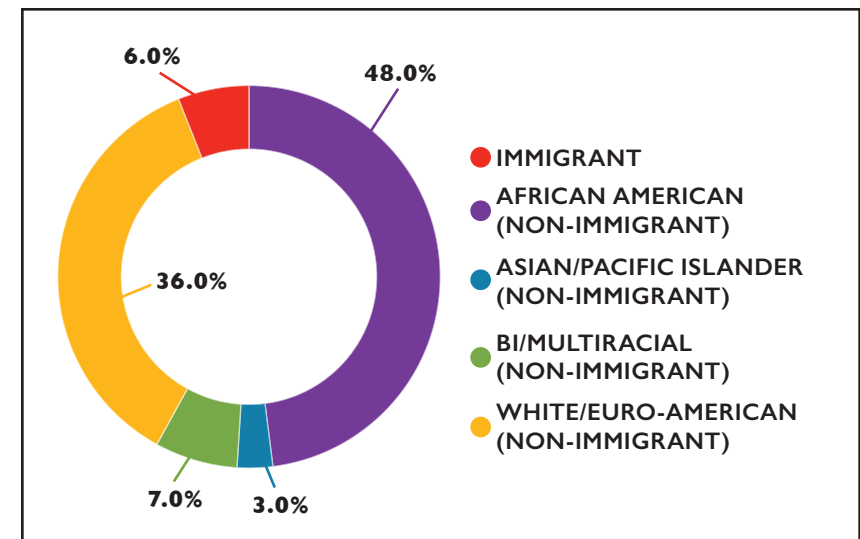
### 2023 LOANS BY PURPOSE



### 2023 LOANS BY IMPACT



### CHURCH LOANS BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND IMMIGRANT STATUS



## SPECIAL REPORT: FUTURING HOPE: CHURCH LEGACY & COMPLETION

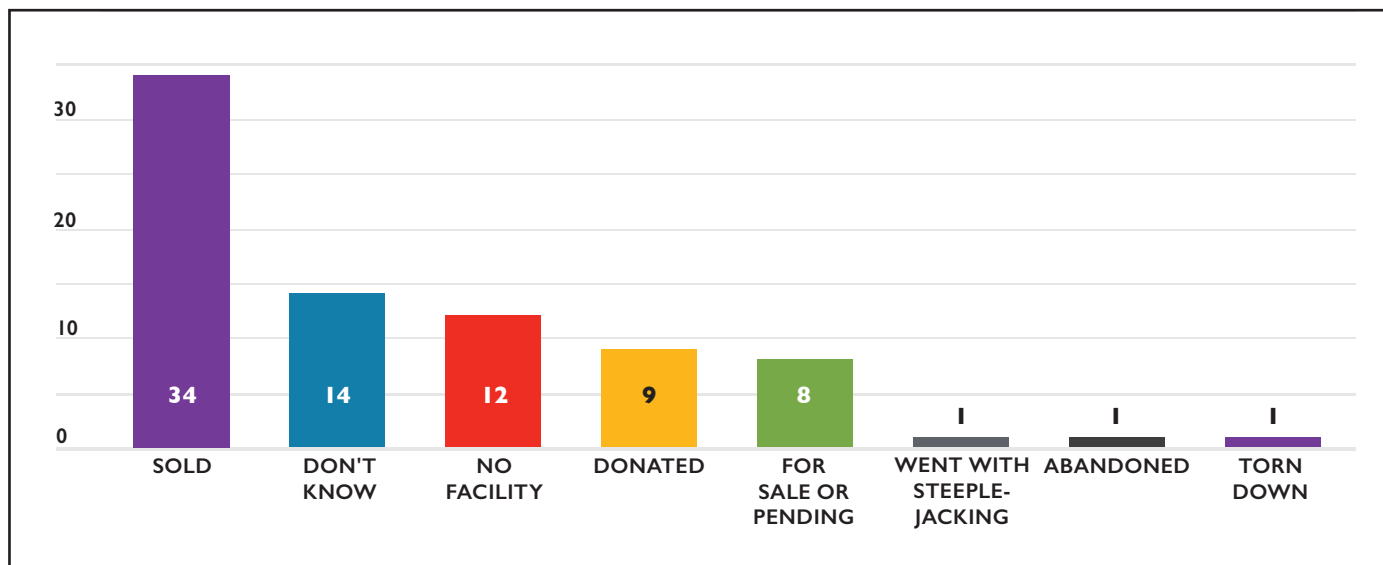
*Contributed by: Taylor Russell, Senior Data Analyst and Rev. David Schoen, Minister for Church Legacy & Closure, Church Building & Loan Fund*

In the Spring of 2023, a **Church Legacies Survey** was designed to track closed church assets and study the legacy of 104 UCC congregations that closed between 2020-2022. A list of closed churches was pulled from the UCC Data Hub and churches were grouped by Conference before listing them in the survey so that we could collect individual church information from multiple sources. Three online surveys were developed. One specifically for UCC Conferences, another for UCC Archivists, and one for UCC Seminaries and National Organizations (*National Organizations and UCC Seminaries responded to the same survey*). Each survey was designed to glean information about a closed church from their lens. The online survey was sent via email in July 2023 to answer the following questions:

- What happened with the church property?
- What happened to the church members?
- How were church records and historic materials archived?
- Did the church consult or speak with their Conference about the legacy decision?
- Where do the church property and financial assets end up?

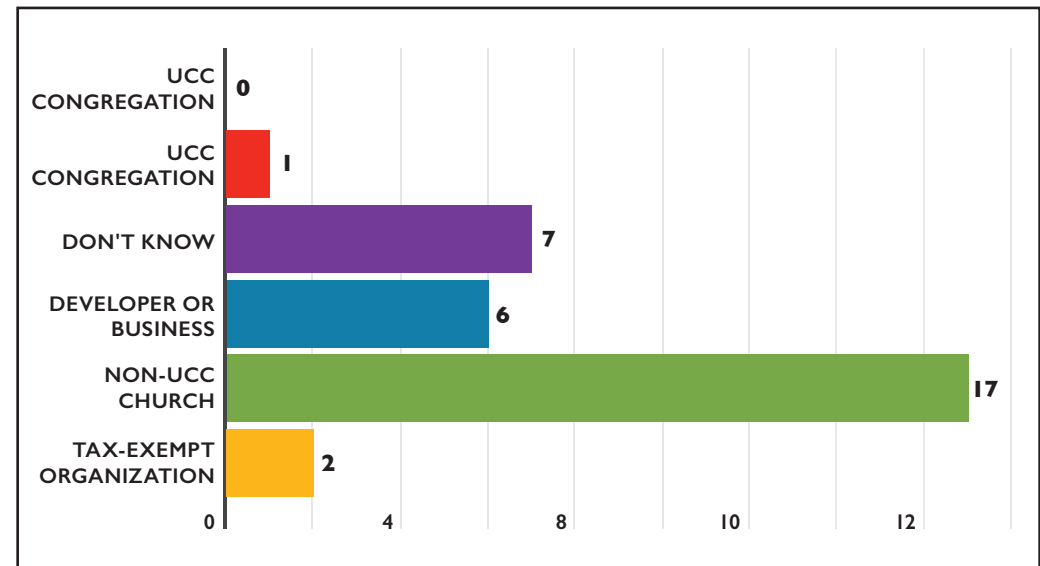
We received information on eighty-four closed congregations. This Special Report will focus on the first question, what happened with the church property.

### WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CHURCH PROPERTY?



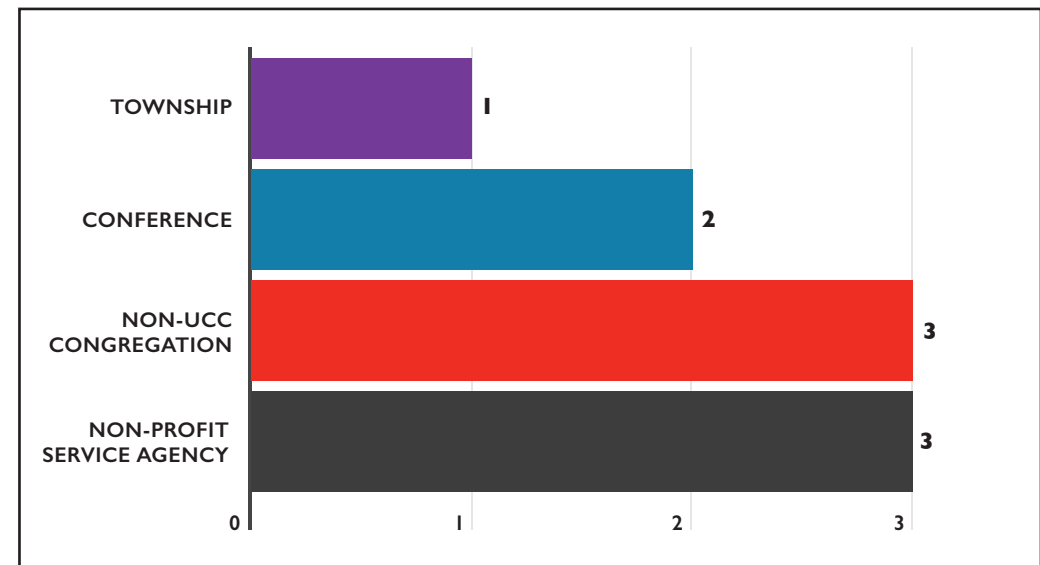
Of the thirty-four properties sold, the majority were sold or donated to Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) religious communities, including two Islamic centers. Six properties were sold to a business / developer and became event/ wedding venues, two were sold to a tax-exempt organization, one property became a personal home, and there are seven properties we have no knowledge of their ownership.

### PROPERTY SOLD TO:



Of the nine properties that were donated, one was given to the local township to become a community center for local service agencies. Two church properties were donated to UCC conferences, two went to non-denominational Euro-American churches, one to a multi-racial congregation, and three to non-profit organizations that provide community and recovery services. In some cases, churches renting from a now closed church received the property.

### PROPERTY DONATED TO:



The summary of what closed congregations became:

- Twenty-six (26) Christian Churches
- Two (2) Islamic Centers/Mosques
- Two (2) community centers
- Two (2) art centers
- Two (2) event and wedding venues
- Two (2) food/clothing/services centers
- One (1) Affordable housing apartment complex
- One (1) Recovery Center
- One (1) Service Center for disabled adults and children
- One (1) personal home
- One (1) Auto dealership
- Five (5) properties are still for sale,
- One (1) was steeple jacked (a group infiltrating an existing congregation, pulling it away from its denominational moorings),
- One church (perhaps 3) was abandoned and one torn down.

In summary, these findings raised more questions for us and the wider church as we shared our findings with survey the participants. While the repurposing of these properties is a wonderful revelation, we cannot ignore the fact that many of these assets are missional losses and missed possibilities for the denomination. How do we encourage church leaders to consider their churches legacy and building transitions before “the end”?

Rev. Schoen has written a series of blog posts for the Vital Signs and Statistics Blog highlighting his research into church assets. You can follow along starting with [The Significance of Church Legacies](#), which provides initial survey findings on what happened with church members, church records and archive materials. Then

check out [Tracking Closed Church Assets](#), Rev. Schoen highlights his findings on church properties and financial implications of closures, and finally [What’s Up with Church Buildings!](#) The latest post offers an example of churches making difficult decisions about their properties in order to live into their new vision or mission.

## SPECIAL REPORT: MISSION DRIVEN PLANNING, TRAINING LEADERS, & FINANCING THE FUTURE

*Contributed by Taylor B. Russell, Senior Data Analyst, Jill White, Lead Regional Mission Interpreter, and Monica Butko, Senior Loan Administrator of Church Building & Loan Fund*

The UCC Church Building & Loan Fund celebrated its 170th anniversary at the United Church of Christ 34th General Synod in Indianapolis last summer. For 170 years, CB&LF has served congregations of the UCC, and beyond, throughout the United States. We help churches plan, raise, finance, and build transformative projects that transform communities.

Across the United States, CB&LF helps churches that are looking to purchase their first church building or land site, want to construct, renovate, or develop a church building, school, parsonage, or other church-owned property that will advance the mission of the Church. For the growing number of churches that want to transform communities by redeveloping their properties to build affordable housing and/or community development projects, CB&LF offers development services and financing that helps church leaders from project concept to completion.

### FINANCE

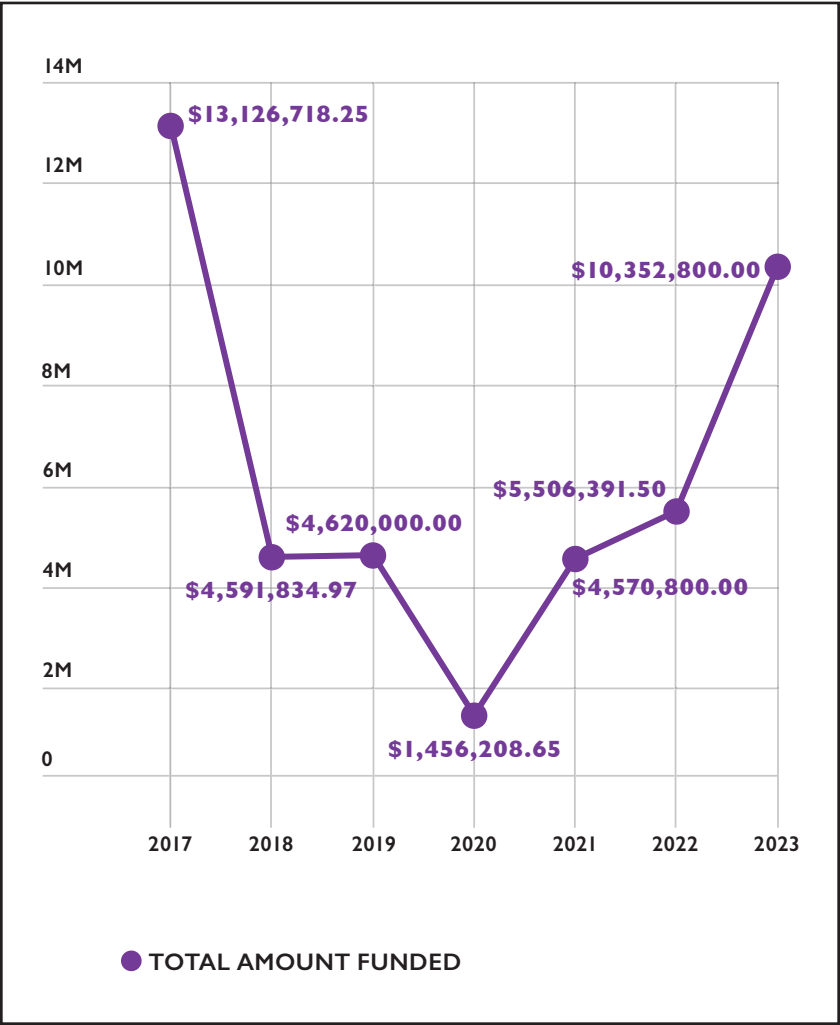
In 2023, CB&LF experienced an increase in loan financing comparable to pre-COVID levels. A total of fourteen congregations were approved and funded for loans with a combined total of over ten million dollars (\$10,352,800) in eleven states, and Puerto Rico. These congregations were a combination of United Church of Christ churches as well as independent congregations of other faiths that utilized the Fund for the purpose of purchasing a church building, and a variety of renovations and repairs, such as: expansions to kitchens, the purchase and renovation of a parsonage, classrooms, physical therapy gymnasium, space for childcare and elder programs, a music school, housing for women, the expansion and repair of a parking lot, and for more practical purposes, such as a ceiling repair in a sanctuary.

### PLAN & RAISE

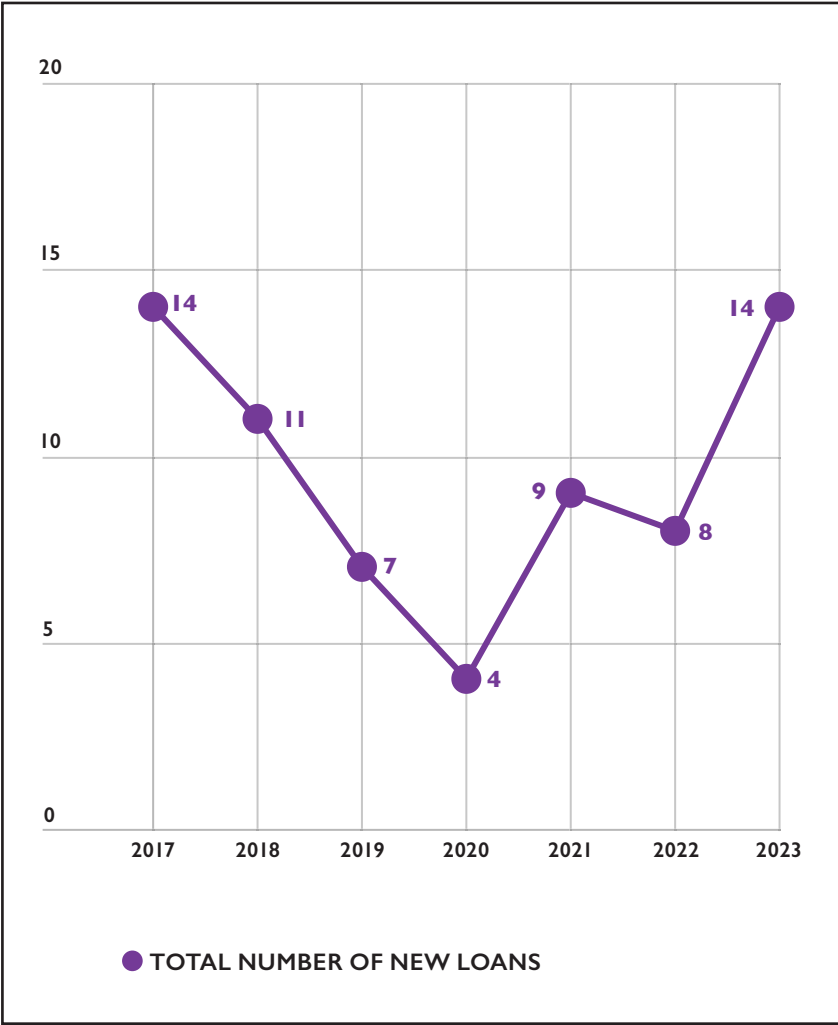
CB&LF Capacity Building Services (Visioning, Strategic Planning and Implementation, Stewardship, and Capital Campaigns) also saw significant success in 2023. Nine churches were guided through the Visioning and Strategic Planning or Stewardship programs, and eight churches raised more than \$6 million dollars by way of Capital Campaigns. Prior to starting a capital campaign, through Financial Feasibility Studies, the Lead Regional Mission Interpreter, Jill White, helped congregations determine their readiness. In cases where a capital campaign was determined to not be immediately feasible, recommendations for future preparation were offered.

Our **Gifted Fee Campaign Policy** allows churches to designate 30% of their contracted fee as charitable gifts to support missions or ministries of their choice. Last year, nineteen churches gifted more than \$226,000 to 43 missions/ministries nationwide. This included over \$119,000 supporting various ministries, and more than \$78,000 went toward Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM). Gifted fees provided an average of \$5,260.52 per ministry.

TOTAL DOLLAR AMOUNT OF LOANS FUNDED BY YEAR



TOTAL NUMBER OF NEW LOANS FUNDED BY YEAR





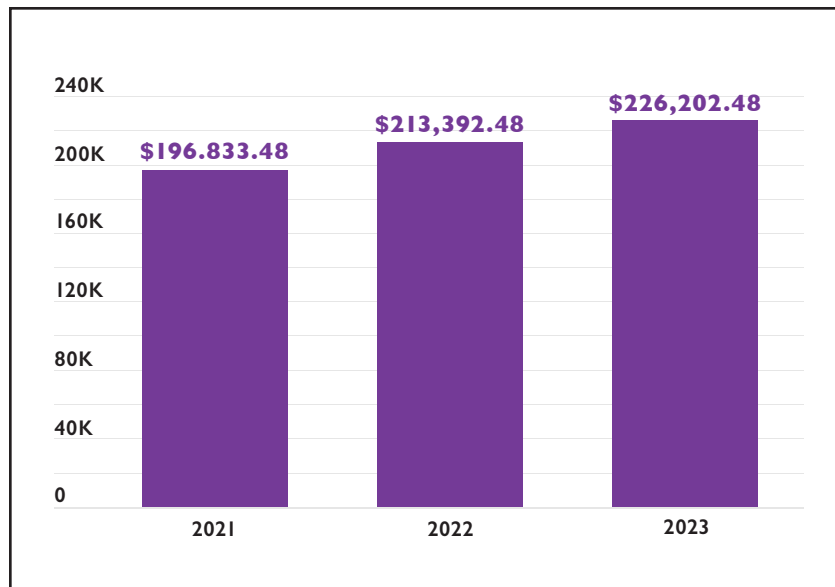
**1,051**  
LEADERS TRAINED

**\$6,207,085**  
(2023) TOTAL RAISED FROM CAPITAL CAMPAIGNS

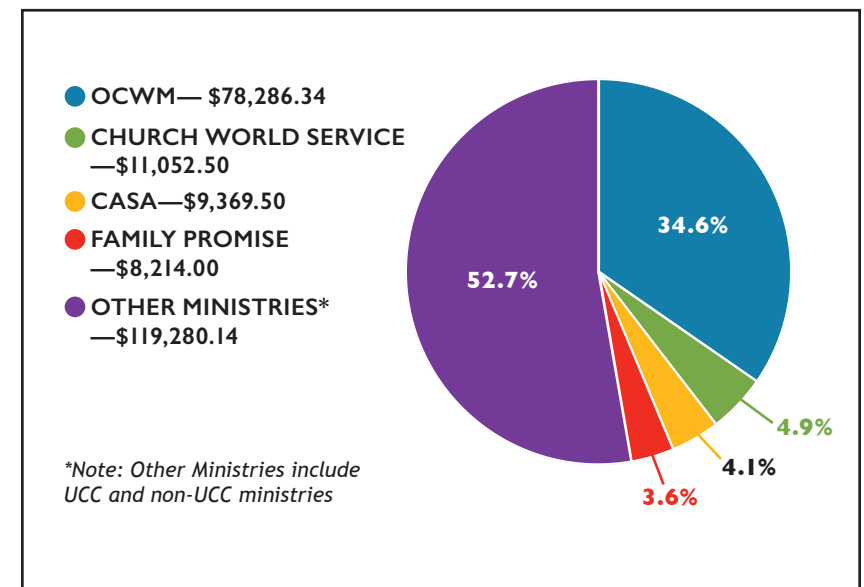
**\$226,202.48**  
TOTAL GIFTED FEE ALLOCATION (2023)

**113**  
TOUCHPOINTS ACROSS THE NATION IN 2023!

#### TOTAL GIFTED FEE ALLOCATIONS (2021–2023)



#### (2023) RECEIVING MINISTRIES OF GIFTED FEES



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CB&LF SERVICES AND PROGRAMS OR HOW WE CAN SERVE YOU AND IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES, VISIT THE WEBSITE:  
[HTTPS://CBLFUND.ORG](https://cblfund.org) OR CONTACT [INFOCBLF@UCC.ORG](mailto:INFOCBLF@UCC.ORG).



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