

United Protestant Church of Morgan Park
Information for Acting Pastor candidates

Summary: ½ time Acting Pastor position, to begin 2/1/12 or as soon thereafter as possible.

United Protestant Church of Morgan Park Mission Statement:

“The church where members become disciples”

“The United Protestant Church aspires to be a vibrant Christian congregation that is sustainable and welcoming to all, putting its faith into practice through its outreach activities. The church strives to be the center of the community’s mind, body and spirit through its ministries and the programs it offers.”

Who we are:

United Protestant Church is a small congregation based in a residential area near the far western edge of Duluth, MN. We come from the Congregational side of the UCC, and in 2007, we celebrated our 90th Anniversary. We currently have about 70 members and average about 30 - 50 attending Sunday service. Our congregation has members of all ages, but definitely skews older. We have a small number of children and teenagers.

Our worship services are generally quite traditional. Winter services start at 10:30am on Sundays. This past summer we tried an experiment and conducted weekly worship services on Wednesday evenings. This met with some success in minimizing the loss in attendance that often accompanies warm weather.

Our church was one of two built by the U.S. Steel Corporation in the Morgan Park neighborhood. Morgan Park was developed as a model community for the workers at its mill in western Duluth. In addition to providing a hospital, stores, recreation facilities and police force, the steel plant took very good care of our church for many years.

Our building was built about 1921 and is a large, Gothic-style building. The main floor consists of the sanctuary, an office, a small library room, and a store room. In the basement are the restrooms, a large fellowship hall, a kitchen, a second office, another store room and a machine room. The building is situated one city block from the entrance to the Morgan Park neighborhood.

Financially, we are not in as stable a situation as we would like. In 2004, our sanctuary required a large reconstruction project which resulted in a substantial amount of debt being incurred. We have been working hard to retire the debt and have made considerable progress, but church revenues have shown a downward trend in recent

months. In the past several months though, we have conducted a full-fledged stewardship drive and have seen a good response and increase from the great majority of members.

Our present minister announced his retirement in November of 2011 and plans to make it official as of January 2012. He was paid a two thirds time salary, but it is clear that he volunteered many more hours to our parish. He started his employment with us in 2001.

We do a reasonable amount of outreach, given the size of our congregation. Our newest and most successful endeavor is the co-sponsorship of a monthly Ruby's Pantry food distribution. This activity, in conjunction with Morgan Park's Catholic church, has been under way since June of 2011 and distributes about 100 pounds of food to each of between 250 and 400 neighbors each month. We are still searching for ways to turn these people into church members.

Other activities that we undertake include: Thanksgiving and Easter food basket distributions to needy families through our neighborhood elementary school. Besides the denomination, we contribute financially to Churches United In Ministry (CHUM), Salvation Army and Union Gospel Mission. We distributed 8 quilts hand made by our women for the local shelter for Veterans. From the proceeds of our annual Halloween Carnival, we buy Christmas presents for needy children who attend three different grade schools. We support the local food shelf with a monthly can and staple drive.

Our congregation has been very intentional in making the choice that we want to move forward, to be a larger presence in our community and to grow our membership. During the past year, three members of our congregation joined our pastor and participated in a weekend "Turnaround Church" conference sponsored by the Wisconsin UCC. We have undertaken numerous activities to revitalize our church - with varied results. The above-mentioned stewardship drive, the Ruby's Pantry project and the Wednesday evening services have been the most noteworthy successes.

While we have seen some progress in our turnaround work, we understand that our efforts are not yet completed. We recognize that there is a considerable level of isolation between our church and the surrounding community. The Morgan Park community has transformed in the past 30 years, but most would recognize that UP Church has not kept up with those changes.

At this point it would be fair to say that members of the congregation are in different places with regard to openness to change. While the congregation agrees that change is required, there is not full agreement on the scope and nature of change that is

appropriate. As a congregation, we are still somewhat uncertain exactly what role we are called to play in the western Duluth area. We are dedicated to continuing a strong Christian presence within our community, and are willing to consider how that is expressed.

What we are looking for:

We are looking for an Acting Pastor willing to make a one year commitment, with the expectation that at the end of the year we will mutually agree that the acting pastor will become our settled pastor. We are looking for someone to initially serve approximately 50% time. We're somewhat flexible with regard to how the 50% time would be structured. We expect that total compensation will meet guidelines; the split between salary, housing allowance, and other benefits is negotiable. We are hoping to have a new pastor in place as soon as possible.

Some might call it wishful thinking, but it is our hope that working together, we can increase our presence in the community, grow our congregation, establish a more stable financial situation, and that the position will become full-time, so we would prefer to hire someone who is willing/able to work part-time now and full-time when we achieve that goal.

In terms of supporting the congregation, we see leading interesting and inspiring (and, at least initially, fairly traditional) Christ-focused Sunday morning services as an important part of the job. Beyond that, we recognize the need for our new minister to dedicate a considerable amount of his/her efforts to community outreach and member recruitment. We are looking for someone that provides leadership as needed, but also works to grow leaders within the congregation. Reasonable organizational and administrative skills would be beneficial to supplement the contributions of our 10-hour-per-week church secretary.

Looking outward and to the future, we are looking for someone that will help us continue to develop our role in the community. This will require both the ability to help clarify a vision of that role as well as skills to help us implement the vision. Energy, enthusiasm, and an upbeat attitude will be a big help. This person should have a willingness to develop a presence in the western Duluth community, identify and forge appropriate partnerships, and be seen as a religious leader in our community.

For information on compensation and how to apply for this position, contact Associate Conference Minister Rick Wagner at rckw@uccmn.org, or call 612-871-0359.