

# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

Mission Study 2023



## **MISSION STUDY**

### **CONGREGATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF LEWISTON, IDAHO**

In September 2022, Steve Wilbraham, the long-time Pastor of Congregational Presbyterian Church (Congo-Pres), announced his intention to retire in one year — in September 2023. The Church Board, with the approval of Presbytery of the Inland Northwest, promptly adopted a Pastoral Transition Plan that, ideally, would avoid the need for a temporary pastor during the search process. The Congo-Pres Nominating Committee quickly and prayerfully assembled a slate of candidates for a Pastoral Search Committee (PSC), and at a meeting on October 16, 2022, the congregation accepted the following seven individuals to serve on that Committee: Peggy Fulton, Chuck Gabby, Joe Hulett, Kathy Johnson, Mike Rooney, Taylor Schnuerle, and Bev Williams.

The initial task of the PSC was to perform a MISSION STUDY and to produce a document describing WHO WE ARE and WHO WE LONG TO BE. *This is that document.* It begins by providing a brief description of the Church's locale as well as a snapshot of the Church itself — its history, practices, administration, demographics, and ministries. It then summarizes the results of a survey that sought to draw out congregants' views of the church as it is today, their longings for its future, and their opinions about the pastoral attributes that would be most critical in helping guide the Church to discern and follow God's will in the years ahead. We begin with the descriptive elements of the Study.

### **Description of Lewiston**

Located on the Washington-Idaho border in North Central Idaho, Lewiston and its twin city, Clarkston, Washington, lie at the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers and together anchor a metropolitan area commonly referred to as the Lewis-Clark Valley ("L-C Valley" or, simply, "the Valley"). In 2021 the L-C Valley had a population of 64,851; Lewiston's population was 34,447.

Lewiston is an inland port. Cruise boats and barges — the barges transporting cargos of grain, fuel, wood products, and industrial equipment — regularly ply the Columbia-Snake River System between Lewiston and Pacific coast ports at the mouth of the Columbia. The L-C Valley exhibits a diversified economy led by manufacturing (paper products, lumber, ammunition, electrical equipment, aluminum boats), agriculture (terminal elevators, commodity processing), health care (two hospital medical centers and a regional health insurance headquarters), and post-secondary education (Lewis-Clark State College and Walla Walla Community College). It is also home to the storied Nez Perce Tribe.

The award-winning Lewiston Civic Theater brings live theater to the L-C Valley. In addition, Lewis-Clark State College offers many educational, cultural, and sports viewing opportunities to Valley residents — as do the two major state universities that lie within a 35-mile radius of Lewiston: Washington State University in Pullman, and the University of Idaho in Moscow. Spokane, the state of Washington's second largest metropolitan area, is a little over two hours' driving distance north of the Valley.

The Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport offers daily nonstop service to Denver and Salt Lake City, while nearby Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport provides flights to Seattle and Boise. The much larger Spokane International Airport, an FAA “small hub,” is served by eight airlines.

The Lewiston Independent School District comprises seven elementary schools, two middle schools, an alternative high school, and the main high school housed in a state-of-the-art facility completed in 2020. The Valley also is home to several private schools, most of them Christian affiliated.

The L-C Valley and surrounding area provide a rich environment for outdoor recreation, including boating, hunting, fishing, golfing, cycling, hiking, and skiing. The low elevation (the confluence is 745 feet above sea level) and modest annual rainfall (about 12.5 inches) combine to produce a climate that is conducive to outdoor activities during much of the year.

Because of their favorable climate and numerous recreational opportunities, Lewiston and the L-C Valley attract and retain many retirees. This is reflected in Lewiston’s demographic: the median age is 10 percent higher than for both the state of Idaho as a whole and for the entire U.S.

## **Church Description**

### **Overview**

The Congregational Presbyterian Church enjoys a long history in Lewiston and the L-C Valley. It was established as a Presbyterian congregation in 1873. Many years later, in 1939, it merged with Pilgrim Congregational Church, which had been organized in 1904. Just twenty years ago, a family in our congregation nicknamed the Church “Congo-Pres,” and the nickname stuck. Today, most people in the Lewis-Clark Valley know the Church by the shortened version of the name, but whether identified by the more formal name or the casual nickname, we remain a meld of the community at large — an intentional community of friends on a faith journey together.

We seek to know and follow God’s word and to grow deeper in our faith through study, worship, and fellowship. We believe our faith compels us to action, so we strive to be a witness in the L-C Valley by meeting physical as well as spiritual needs. We want to honor God by making a difference in the lives of those around us.

Our mission is TO KNOW CHRIST, TO BECOME LIKE CHRIST, TO SHARE CHRIST. We seek to KNOW CHRIST by attending Bible studies offered throughout the week, following a daily Bible Reading Plan, and attending our Biblically based worship services. We work to BECOME LIKE CHRIST by encouraging and nurturing others through fellowship, small-group involvement, and praying for one another. We strive to SHARE CHRIST through our support of local and worldwide missions, our children’s and youth ministries that are open to the community, and L-C Valley outreach programs.

We offer two worship services each Sunday. Our 9:00 a.m. Contemporary service features music led by our Praise Team. There is a Children’s Time followed by Children’s Church for children kindergarten through grade five. At 11:00 a.m., our Traditional worship service offers the same sermon but with music

led by our Chancel Choir and often includes our Bell Choir. Average Sunday morning attendance is 125. Nursery care is available at both services. Members and friends are encouraged to dress as they feel comfortable, no matter which service they prefer. Between services our members come together for refreshments and fellowship in Fellowship Hall. Both services are available via live stream on our website for those who cannot attend in person.

| Demographics                 |     | Age Distribution |     | Financial Data (2022) |
|------------------------------|-----|------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| <u>Active Members:</u>       | 347 |                  |     | Annual Income:        |
| Presbyterian:                | 278 | 18-29:           | 26  | \$558,000             |
| UCC:                         | 69  | 30-39:           | 24  | Annual Expenses:      |
|                              |     | 40-49:           | 31  | \$578,000             |
|                              |     | 50-59:           | 37  | Mission Giving:       |
| <u>Friends of the Church</u> | 101 | 60-69:           | 92  | \$76,000              |
| (active non members)         |     | 70-79:           | 80  | Administration:       |
|                              |     | 80+:             | 57  | \$471,000             |
| <u>Racial Ethnic:</u>        |     | Total:           | 347 | Program:              |
| Asian                        | 1   |                  |     | \$31,000              |
| Black                        | 1   |                  |     |                       |
| Hispanic                     | 1   |                  |     |                       |
| Native American              | 2   |                  |     |                       |
| Caucasian                    | 336 |                  |     |                       |

## Pastoral History

Congo Pres has a history of long-term pastoral service. In the past 43 years the church has been served by only three full-time Senior Pastors. In addition, two of those Senior Pastors were assisted by full-time Associate Pastors. Those pastors, their denomination, and dates of service are listed below:

Rev. David Kratz, UCC, 1979-1985

Rev. John Williams, Presbyterian, 1986-2003

Associate Pastor Thomas Hansen, Presbyterian, 1992-2005

Rev. Steve Wilbraham, Presbyterian, 2005-present

Associate Pastor Joshua Bruns, Presbyterian, 2006-2015

Associate Pastor McLane Stone, Presbyterian, 2017-2022

## Administration/Operations

The Board (Session) consists of a total of 15 Elders (Presbyterian) and Deacons (UCC), each serving a three-year term, plus the pastor. Elders/Diacons include three Trustees, a Clerk, and an Elder or Deacon for each of the following areas of ministry: Adult Ministry, Children's Ministry, CPC Fund Ministry, Fellowship, Membership and Evangelism, Missions, Senior Adult Ministry, Service, Stewardship, Worship, and Youth. Each Ministry is supported by a committee that meets regularly with its Elder or Deacon.

Our staff currently includes Pastor, Administrator, Director of Music Ministry, Director of Children's Ministries, two Co-Directors of Senior Adult Ministries, Facilities Manager, Secretary, and Custodian.

Over the years, Congo-Pres has acquired several properties on the same block as the church to allow for future expansion. The church owns five houses. Two are used by the church, one for Family Promise hosting and as a residence for the Custodian, and the other as a Youth House. The other three are rental properties until expansion is feasible. There is no debt involved with these properties.

| <b>Missions</b>   | <i>We support:</i>   |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p>We have a generous congregation. Whether through their financial support, time commitments or talents, our members enjoy sharing their gifts. This is reflected in their support of our camp and college scholarships, various missions in the community and abroad, youth mission trips, Family Promise hosting, volunteering within the church and community through Hands and Feet, and various supplemental giving requests throughout the year.</p> | <p>Angel Tree<br/>Two Food Banks<br/>Bovill Presbyterian Church<br/>Kamiah Presbyterian Church<br/>Family Promise<br/>Habitat for Humanity<br/>Interlink<br/>Juvenile Corrections<br/>Kairos Prison Ministry<br/>Life Choices Clinic<br/>Mission Aviation Fellowship</p> | <p>Salvation Army<br/>Snake River Clinic<br/>Willow Center for Grieving Children<br/>Young Life<br/>YWCA Homeless Shelter<br/>Camp N-Sid-Sen (UCC)<br/>Camp Spalding (Presbyterian)<br/>Rocky Mountain College<br/>Whitworth University</p> |

| <b>Opportunities to Serve</b>  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Throughout the week there are many opportunities to serve and grow in fellowship with one another:</p> <p>Coffee Hour Hosting<br/>Christian Book Club<br/>Choir, Praise Team &amp; Bell Choir<br/>Various Studies<br/>Senior Exercise<br/>Ministry Committees</p> | <p>Kids' Club (1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade)<br/>Jolt (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade)<br/>Breakout for Middle School and High School<br/>Reconnect Women's Fellowship<br/>Small Groups<br/>Women's Association<br/>Welcome Team</p> | <p><i>Other areas of service:</i></p> <p>Blanket Drive<br/>Family Promise hosting<br/>Angel Tree gifting<br/>Samaritan's Purse Operation<br/>Shoebox<br/>Hands and Feet<br/>Rake-'em-Up<br/>Vacation Bible School<br/>Food Bank Cart<br/>Hanging of the Greens<br/>Youth Mission Trips</p> |

## Survey Summary

To receive input from our entire congregation regarding our feelings, hopes, aspirations and concerns about Congo-Pres, the Pastor Search Committee conducted a survey of all our members and nonmember attendees. The response to this survey reflects:

- Appreciation for Bible-based, Christ-centered worship, preaching and teaching.
- Gratitude for a warm, compassionate, prayerful, accepting, generous, and friendly family of believers, with whom we can SEEK, EMULATE, AND SHARE CHRIST.
- Respect for the importance of children's and youth programs.
- Devotion to our senior members and their activities.
- Strong support for missions and community outreach.

The survey responses also reflect concerns about:

- Our gradually shrinking membership and an aging congregation.
- Our difficulty in attracting young families to attend and join our church.
- Our inability to fill the sanctuary with members, friends, and guests each Sunday.

Survey respondents are predominantly regular participants in Sunday and other worship services and therefore express general satisfaction with the current state of affairs in our church. Yet they acknowledge that we may need to change in some ways in order to have relevance and vitality in our community and to be the magnet for new members and young families that we all desire.

A second part of the survey asked our respondents to rate a series of qualities and characteristics that they would value in our new senior pastor. The survey results describe a pastor who:

- Is a Bible-based, Christ-centered preacher, teacher, and worship leader.
- Is compassionate, empathetic, and energetic.
- Is a visionary who can motivate and lead the congregation.
- Embraces both pastoral care and community outreach.

We believe that the survey generated valuable insight and prayerful guidance from our congregation. We were pleased by the number of responses and by the constructive, positive feedback they provided — along with the concerns they expressed. The Committee feels that the Mission Study, while brief, offers an accurate portrait of our church that will help us meet the pastor who, guided by the Holy Spirit, will flourish in the future life of our community of believers at Congo-Pres.

## **Closing Prayer**

*Heavenly Father, we ask that you open the eyes of our hearts so that we may see what you want of us in the search for a future pastor for our church. Fill us with love for you, your Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. We understand that you already know our needs and that it is in Your Time. Instill in us patience and peace to be faithful servants to accept this.*

*As the apostle Paul reminds us, we will pray constantly for the needs of our church and for the calling of the best candidate. We are your servants, Lord, and we know that you, as our Father, want the very best for all of us. We love you for the blessings you have bestowed and will continue to bestow on our congregation. We thank you for the opportunity to serve you and we pray that you are pleased with the efforts we have made in your Name.*

*All honor and glory we give to you, O Lord our God.*

*Amen*