Introduction

Sts. Clare & Francis, a community of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion, has embarked on a search process to call our next part-time Lead Pastor. We call this person to guide us into the future with an emphasis on our growth, both spiritually and in membership. The community does not own a physical building, but rather rents space in two churches that are less than ¼ mile apart in the city of Webster Groves, Missouri. Office space for the Parish is also within the city of Webster Groves, on the campus of Eden Theological Seminary, which is located very close to both churches.

The Parish Council created a Selection Committee to organize the search process, develop the Parish Profile, screen applications, interview candidates, and recommend a choice to the ECC Presiding Bishop, the Parish Council and the entire congregation for a confirmation vote. The Selection Committee created a member survey and subsequently conducted convocations. The information and data gleaned from that process are included in this profile. The Selection Committee created this Parish Profile which outlines the current status and history of our congregation, along with areas that the members would like to grow and develop.

We believe that the relationship between a church and those called by that church to serve as pastors and teachers is strengthened when vital information is openly shared by all partners. To that extent, we attest that to the best of our abilities, this profile accurately represents our church. We have not knowingly withheld any information that would be helpful to candidates. As the Selection Committee has been charged with the responsibility for identifying and recommending a suitable new pastor for our church, we have been authorized to share the information in this profile with potential candidates.

We understand that a candidate may wish to explore further knowledge, information and opinion about our church. We encourage a candidate to do so, recognizing that an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing a healthy relationship between a pastor and the members of the church.

This document is only for use at the discretion of the Pastoral Search Committee in its communication with potential candidates. It is not for general publication.

Interested candidates may send a cover letter, resume, and a link to their audio/video sermons to:

Mary Vonderheide
Co-Chair of Sts. Clare & Francis Selection Committee
mary.vonderheide@sbcglobal.net
History

The founding members of Sts. Clare & Francis (SCF) discovered one another in the fall of 2004 and decided to form a parish together. They identified as Catholics who hoped for a church where everyone was welcome regardless of gender, race, marital status, sexual orientation, or any other quality to fully participate. They wanted a church where all the members, not just the clergy, had a voice and a way to serve.

This original group of ten celebrated their first liturgy at an Episcopal church in north St. Louis County. Two of the members, one of whom became the founding pastor, Francis Krebs, attended the annual retreat of a church they had learned of called the Ecumenical Catholic Communion (ECC). The founding members believed the ECC’s principles were a good fit with those of the founding membership and elected to become a part of that church.

The group chose the name “Sts. Clare & Francis” for their new community, in order to emphasize gender equity and to appeal to the great Franciscan tradition of living the gospel simply and of reforming the church by modeling something different. They incorporated with the state and formed a Parish Council in 2005.

Many people believed they had found a spiritual home at SCF and the congregation grew gradually. A young woman who had experienced a call to ministry since she was a little girl was ordained to the priesthood in 2007 and served as associate pastor until 2014. News of this ordination of a woman drew additional members to the community. When she ultimately left the community, the increased number of members required that she be replaced. The community called two new part-time associate pastors—a man, Rev. Jim Schratz, and another woman, Rev. Kay Schmitt.

In 2015, pastor Rev. Francis Krebs was elected Presiding Bishop of the entire ECC. Publicity associated with his commissioning also served to draw attention to the community, yielding a further increase in membership, which ultimately reached a peak level of about 130 members.

Liturgies had only been celebrated on Saturday evenings in the sanctuary of Peace UCC church, where the community rented space. But in April of 2017, the community agreed that there was interest in adding a Sunday liturgy. An agreement was struck with the nearby Christ Lutheran Church and Sunday morning Masses were held at their Arden Mead Center. Attendance thereafter at both weekend services usually totaled more than 40 people.

Rev. Kay Schmitt retired in 2019. By that time, membership had begun to dwindle. In recognition of this decreased size, Rev. Schratz offered to resign at the end of the year to reduce staffing costs. Church membership eventually leveled off at about 70 members.

At about this time, Bishop Francis announced his intention to retire. He chose mid-2021 as his official retirement date to allow the congregation to plan for moving forward as a community without him as the pastor. The Parish Council then named the Pastoral Selection Committee. That group is seeking a new pastor to recommend to the community, whose approval is required in order for the recommendation to become the official pastor of Sts. Clare & Francis.
Worship & Fellowship

Saints Clare & Francis celebrates two masses each weekend. On Saturday evenings at 5:00 PM, we gather in the sanctuary of Peace United Church of Christ in Webster Groves. A Sunday morning mass is offered at 9:00 AM in the Mead Center of Christ Lutheran Church in Webster Groves. Sts Clare & Francis began renting the space at Peace UCC from its beginning in 2005 and added the Sunday service at Christ Lutheran in 2017. Sts Clare & Francis is able to offer special services such as Ash Wednesday, Triduum Services, and Christmas by using a combination of both buildings.

The mass is based on the Catholic tradition, stemming from the roots of the early Catholic tradition and reflecting many of the thoughts of Vatican Council II. The Eucharist is celebrated at each mass. Eucharist is offered to all who attend service, with no exceptions. Sts Clare & Francis is blessed with several members who have rich theological backgrounds. Because of this, Sts Clare & Francis is able to offer a rotating schedule of homilists (both laity and ordained) who bring biblical teachings with an eye on real-life experiences and events of everyday Christians in a progressive theology. Our congregation comes together to not only share the Eucharist but to attend worship that is spiritually and intellectually challenging. Sts Clare & Francis endeavors to use inclusive language in celebrating the mass; for example, we begin the Lord’s Prayer by saying “Our Mother, Our Father who art in Heaven”.

Through the years, Sts Clare & Francis has celebrated several special services with Peace United Church of Christ. These services include special days such as Good Friday during Lent, a Blue Christmas service, and the Blessings of the Animals. Peace UCC has invited Sts Clare & Francis members to attend and be a part of some learning opportunities, such as a Lenten series on white supremacy.

Typically, the homilist communicates with the presider and music minister to ensure that a theme is maintained for each service. In the past, the laity has also been involved in creating special services, such as a service held during February that celebrates Black History Month. The liturgy committee designates overarching themes, especially for liturgical seasons. Our community typically a music minister to coordinate music for services, but our last music minister recently relocated to another state. The community is currently seeking a new music minister.
Theology

The faith tradition that we follow separated from Rome in 1889, primarily over the jurisdiction and authority of the pope, the local election of bishops, and the inclusion of laity in the governance of the church. Other distinctive elements of the ECC include women priests, married clergy, complete equality of LGBTQ persons, no separation of divorced and remarried persons, no ontological separation of clergy and an open communion table. We express the non-dualistic, bedrock idea that gives birth to these distinctives: the belief that God is not separate from us and is present in all creation and in every person, everywhere, equally. We believe this idea to be prevalent in the Christian mystical tradition. These belief support our identity as Ecumenical (from a Greek word meaning “all over the world”) Catholics. We search for the spark of the divine in all persons from every tradition. St. Vincent of Lerins said, around the year 434, that what defines Catholic is “what has been believed everywhere, always and by all”. Churches can agree on certain things, but what of the differences they have? Need these block unity? John XXIII’s first encyclical, Ad Petri Cathedram of 1959, included a famous quote that speaks to living in unity when not all things are held in common: “But the common saying, expressed in various ways and attributed to various authors, must be recalled with approval: in essentials, unity; in doubtful matters, liberty; in all things, charity.” It is worth noting that describing one’s boundaries does not always point directly to the heart of our ethos. There are many ways to say this, but we can say that at our center we are followers of Jesus Christ, gratefully living in the love of God, and giving our lives to the full thriving of every human being and indeed all of creation.

Here are the ECC’s affirmations of our faith:

**Christ:** We affirm the faith of the ancient Christian Church that the person of Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Christ, the hope of Israel who has been revealed to us as the Son of God who through his life, death and resurrection brings salvation to the whole world.

**Church:** We affirm that the Church of Jesus Christ embodies all who follow Jesus and are joined in an indissoluble union with Christ and one another through baptism becoming the People of God. This Body of Christ is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic and is entrusted with continuing the saving work of Christ in the world through the proclamation of the Gospel and the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries which are commonly called the Sacraments.

**Scripture:** We affirm the Sacred Scriptures that have been handed on to us through the Apostolic Tradition and are held in common with the historic Catholic Church. These Sacred Writings are truly inspired by the human encounter with the Divine in history and are both reliable and authoritative in matters of faith and practice.
Sacraments: We affirm that the Church in her very nature is Sacramental. Therefore, the work of the Church is essentially understood as a Sacramental Ministry. The Sacraments are grace-filled moments of encounter with the Divine. Through our participation in the celebration of these Divine Mysteries we are renewed by the saving presence of the Resurrected Christ.

Creed: We affirm the Nicene Creed as the foundational profession of catholic faith as it was originally promulgated by the Ecumenical Councils of Nicea in 325 and Constantinople in 381. We realize that this profession does not preclude further development in our theological understanding and expression.

The Declaration of Utrecht: We affirm that the Declaration of Utrecht (September 24, 1889) is consistent with the ancient tradition of the Catholic Church in its rejection of both universal papal jurisdiction and the infallibility of the papal office.

Our Catholic Culture: We affirm that each baptized person is an equal member of the Catholic Church and that in the ECC this equality must be evident in Synodal and local governance and ministry; that all the baptized, irrespective of gender identity, marital status or sexual orientation and relationship, are welcome to join in celebrating the Sacraments; that the ministerial priesthood in the ECC is open to all the baptized, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation and relationship, or marital status; and that in moral and ethical decision-making the ECC supports the primacy of an individual’s conscience.

The ECC is a member of both the National Council of Churches (NCC) and the Church World Service. The National Council of Churches is a diverse covenant community of 38 member communions and over 35 million individuals – 100,000 congregations from Protestant, Anglican, historic African-American, Orthodox, Evangelical, and Living Peace traditions – in a common commitment to advocate and represent God’s love and promise of unity in our public square. NCC works with secular and interfaith partners to advance a shared agenda of peace, progress, and positive change. The Church World Service is a sister organization of the NCC, providing sustainable self-help, development, disaster relief, and refugee assistance around the world.
What We Seek in a New Pastor – Roles & Responsibilities

Sts Clare & Francis is seeking a pastor who can provide spiritual leadership and clear vision for our small but vibrant community. In a survey of our community, members were clear that we need a pastor who is spiritually centered and can help develop the spiritual life of those in our community. We need a leader who both demonstrates and can generate passion, dedication and commitment in the community and help us set a collaborative vision for rebuilding our membership after a season of decline.

It is critical that our new pastor is compassionate, empathetic, and welcoming of people with divergent views, gender identities, sexual preferences, races and ethnicities. Our ideal candidate will have the ability to deal both fearlessly and effectively with conflict when it arises. We would like our new pastor to be a proven collaborator, team player and problem-solver, demonstrating the ability to work well with the other clergy in our community, our lay leaders, and our Parish Council. They will foster a strong sense of fellowship among our members.

Our new pastor should have a caring and loving soul. They will be a good listener and an effective communicator. They will live a life of integrity and follow through on their commitments to the community. We are looking for someone who is grounded, emotionally secure, and sensitive to the needs of our parishioners. We would like someone who is an effective administrator and maintains a level of organization and clarity in the community’s operations.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we seek a pastor who is theologically compatible with the principles of Sts. Clare & Francis and the larger ECC. This includes being a strong voice for social justice and helping members explore ways to live their faith through community action. We know that the best candidate may not yet be ordained with the ECC, but we would expect them to pursue ordination as a condition of employment.
Throughout 2020, small groups of church members (6-10 people) gathered via Zoom to consider SCF’s core values and to articulate the statements of commitments. Then, feedback was solicited from those members who could not attend the Zoom gatherings.

**SCF's core values are the foundation of the church.**
Our communal commitments are a reflection of our core values. They define and support our mission and ministries.

Our values and commitments provide guidance in the identification of new ministries and in the appreciation of established ministries. Our values and commitments will help us choose new leadership that is committed to what is most important to our community.
Sts. Clare and Francis Statements of Commitment

**Statement of Commitment to Inclusion, Diversity and Welcoming**

*We, the people of Sts. Clare and Francis, are committed to the inclusion of all persons, no exceptions, on our journey with God together. By including, we honor the presence of God in all persons and in all of creation; by embracing diversity, we allow a richer and deeper atmosphere, through which the gifts and talents of all persons are recognized and treasured; and, by welcoming others to a safe place for healing, our own experiences of exclusion are transformed into a gift for others.*

**Statement of Commitment to Spiritual Challenge and Growth**

*We, the people of Sts. Clare and Francis, value spiritual growth and seek spiritual challenge. We believe our life’s work is to transcend our inner self and deepen our relationship with God, one another and all of creation. As a community, we are committed to reflecting these values through small faith groups, contemplative prayer, spirituality-focused events and a liturgy filled with shared musical expression.*

**Statement of Commitment to Service, Caring, Compassion and Solidarity**

*We, the people of Sts. Clare and Francis, recognize that injustice persists in the world; and we are committed to act on behalf of those most affected. We believe that every living creature is an expression of God; and we are committed to our call to serve and act as compassionate stewards toward all of creation. As a community we are deeply committed to each other; and strive to be instruments and witnesses of the breadth of God’s compassion and action towards all of creation.*

**Statement of Commitment to Community, Friendship and Intimacy**

*We, the people of Sts. Clare and Francis, are committed to community, friendship and intimacy. We are aware that we are participating in something greater than ourselves. The Holy Spirit connects and flows between us as we share our stories, care for one another in transitions, and gather at liturgy. We are called to seek the face of Christ in everyone, most especially in the marginalized and oppressed of our greater community.*
The Sts. Clare and Francis community lives out its values and commitments:

Inclusion, Diversity and Welcoming

From its very beginnings, SCF has been a community that is based on the inclusion of people from all backgrounds, with or without baptism or other sacraments. All gender identities and sexual orientations are not only included, but invitation to belong is woven into the tapestry of who we are. We participate yearly in the St. Louis Pride Festivals and welcome and invite all we meet there to join our community.

This diversity can be seen in our membership, leadership, and our clergy and in our ministries. SCF has ordained both men and women; they serve our community without hierarchy or deference. While our masses are presided over by ordained clergy, we also have several theologically trained members, men and women, who regularly preach the gospel, giving us a wonderful diversity of thought and challenge to live as we are called.

Our community, with deep humility, welcomes everyone to Christ’s table in Eucharist—with no exceptions. It’s with the same humility and gratification that we intentionally take special care to extend hospitality to our guests and new members. We greet and introduce ourselves to guests and offer a welcome packet with detailed information about our community. Yearly, we host a special Mass and dinner to celebrate all new members.

Spiritual Challenge and Growth

Sts. Clare & Francis strives to challenge itself and keep alive the search for spiritual growth that brought so many of us to our pews. Our presiders each write their own liturgies which gives depth to the message of the gospel; clergy and preachers strive to create services and homilies founded upon theologically-based teachings for our modern lives.

We look for opportunities for interfaith worship, collaborating on services annually with Peace UCC (with whom we share our worship space). We have also gone in groups to worship with other communities and have invited other communities to come and worship in our tradition.

Our community has a long-standing commitment to spiritual growth through Small Faith Groups. We have several vibrant groups at this time, and look toward continued development of this intimate sharing of the faith journey with each other. Our faith groups add intimacy to our liturgies and enhance our commitment to one another.

The search for ways to express our faith and grow more deeply in the love of Christ is evidenced in many ways. Over the years, we have hosted many opportunities for deeper learning and worship, including contemplative prayer experiences, book and movie discussions, and themed gatherings such as Doubters and Skeptics, Faith on Tap, and Death Cafe, all aimed at discussing different ideas that challenge our thinking on faith and spirituality.

Service, Caring, Compassion and Solidarity

These are the cornerstones of St. Clare & Francis. Out of deep recognition that we as individuals and as a community have been generously blessed, we have committed to sharing what we have with each other, our larger community and the world.

Sts. Clare & Francis sets aside 10% of its revenues and annually shares it with other non-profit organizations who share our values and demonstrate a commitment to helping others.

We share our belief in helping our brothers and sisters in less developed countries by participating in the Kiva Program. Kiva pools the funds of many groups and organizations and makes loans to people around the world. These loans can...
be life changing; helping artisans and small business owners achieve stability and sustainability, which in turn improves and helps to sustain their communities.

Our Caring Ministry has recently been renewed and has evolved into a new concept. We care for one another within our community by way of the We Care Collective. Having faith that each one of us has something to give to others in times of need or crisis, we have developed a way to call on each other's gifts in an organized and intentional way. The We Care Collective is an umbrella that also includes our prayer list, pastoral care and Matthew 25 fund (restricted donations for helping parish members in financial crisis.)

Father Dickson Cemetery has won the hearts of SCF members. Father Dickson opened as a burial ground for African Americans on August 30, 1903. Since 2013, members of Sts. Clare & Francis have provided some of the labor needed to maintain the beauty and integrity of the cemetery grounds, volunteering their services for cleanup details.

Community, Friendship and Intimacy

Sts. Clare & Francis is strong on hospitality. In addition to our intentional efforts to welcome and include visitors and new members to our liturgies, our community is strengthened by the time we spend together. Special care is taken to see that all visitors are welcomed and greeted upon arrival for mass; name tags are worn by members and are provided for guests.

The Hospitality Committee plans, organizes and sets the stage for periodic potluck dinners, gatherings solely for the purpose of building our relationships with each other after Mass. Visitors are invited and strongly encouraged to join us. During the summer months, we enjoy our potlucks barbecue style at one another's homes.

Sts. Clare & Francis expresses commitment to intimacy with Lenten Witnessing. At each weekend liturgy during Lent, individuals in the community are invited to share their story of faith with the congregation present.

We take responsibility for further defining who we are when we gather to discuss ideas, issues and challenges in an open forum, which informs the Parish Council and Pastor of the collective thinking of our members. Community convocations are convened when necessary, and every effort is employed to reach consensus.

The commitment to sustaining this community can be seen in our efforts to financially support Sts. Clare and Francis. Stewardship is a means of continually renewing and recommitting ourselves to God, and SCF conducts the annual pledge drive with as much emphasis on the gifts of our time and talents as on our financial support. We walk by faith as we share in the vision of the early church--living in community and sharing each one’s gifts with the other.

Our Task Force is the combined efforts and membership of the Fundraising and PR Committees, whose events are planned each year to financially support the community, provide more opportunity for gathering and fellowship, and further our presence in the larger community. In the spirit of the SCF philosophy, our events are outside the box,
including Mouse Races, a Road Rally, Soup Suppers, informal Bingo, and creative approaches to raffles. The Task Force also manages our social media, and will soon release an all-new parish website.

Sts. Clare and Francis is an active and influential part of the larger Ecumenical Catholic Communion (ECC) with a history of engaging in the planning and presentations at our National Synods, as well as taking on leadership roles in the House of Laity. SCF hosted the first synod of the more recently formed Ecumenical Catholic Diocese of Mid America, representing the Midwest region in the national ECC.
Governance

All authority in the parish is held by the community and delegated as set forth in the constitution and by-laws. The community believes God is active in the lives of parishioners and God’s Word for the parish is primarily found in the faith experiences of the community. The parish as a whole, through its registered members, retains the authority to select the parish council, select the Pastor(s), approve changes to the Constitution and By-laws, and make decisions about real estate, debt and parish affiliation.

Ordinary parish decision-making authority is distributed between the Pastor and the Parish Council.

The Pastor is the delegated decision-maker in the areas of clergy management, Parish liturgical programs and initiatives, and Parish activities necessary to maintain and enhance the spiritual and theological direction of the Parish. The Pastor is also an ex officio non-voting member of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council is the parish decision-making body dedicated to fulfilling the mission and obligations of the parish through the authority delegated from the parish membership. The Council is responsible for making and implementing decisions on:

- Work performed by various committees
- Promoting opportunities for sharing faith in community, prayer and ministry
- Providing religious education
- Liturgy and music
- Public relations
- Hospitality
- Mission
- Hiring and firing of Parish staff and other issues related to human resources
- The physical needs of the Parish environment
- The financial and budgetary needs of the Parish
- Acquisitions and purchases for the Parish
- Parish fundraising
Finances, Budget & Stewardship

Revenues

Sts. Clare & Francis relies on the faithful financial support of parish families through annual pledges and fundraising events.

Recent pledge drive results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of pledges</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ pledged</td>
<td>$58,868</td>
<td>$77,835</td>
<td>$71,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ received</td>
<td>$95,081</td>
<td>$80,520</td>
<td>$73,940</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recent fundraiser results:

- 2019—Raffle and Mouse Race events yielded net $6,369
- 2020—Soup & Salad Dinner and Road Rally yielded net $1,639 in Covid year
- 2021—Virtual Bingo and Mouse Race events yielded net $2,017 in second Covid year

Sts. Clare & Francis also has restricted contributions for the Matthew 25 Fund which serves parishioners in need of temporary financial assistance. The balance in the fund is currently about $5,000.

Expenses

The largest cost incurred by Sts. Clare & Francis is for parish staff salaries and stipends for those who serve as substitute liturgy presiders and/or preachers. In both 2019 and 2020, these costs constituted 72% of annual expenses. The 2021 budget envisions a total of 65% of the year’s costs being expended for staff.

Rental costs for worship space and church offices make up about 15% of annual expenses in all years from 2019 through 2021.

The remaining significant costs are determined as a percentage of the year’s unrestricted contributions: ECC dues and Ecumenical Catholic Diocese of Mid America dues, which are 7% and 1%, respectively.

Actual financial results are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Actual 2019</th>
<th>Actual 2020</th>
<th>Actual 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted donations</td>
<td>$95,081</td>
<td>$80,720</td>
<td>$73,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising proceeds</td>
<td>7,337</td>
<td>1,922</td>
<td>2,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 25 gifts</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc. receipts</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>1,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total revenues</strong></td>
<td>$103,234</td>
<td>$83,082</td>
<td>$77,316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expenses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staffing costs</th>
<th>82,242</th>
<th>59,075</th>
<th>$38,741</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church and office rents</td>
<td>15,032</td>
<td>10,753</td>
<td>10,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dues</td>
<td>6,882</td>
<td>6,644</td>
<td>5,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tithing</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other expenses</td>
<td>4,556</td>
<td>3,350</td>
<td>5,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 25 disbursements</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td>$113,912</td>
<td>$81,223</td>
<td>$60,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net income/(loss)</strong></td>
<td>($10,678)</td>
<td>$1,859</td>
<td>$16,484</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sts. Clare & Francis has no indebtedness. Significant asset balances are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operating cash</td>
<td>$14,191</td>
<td>$17,247</td>
<td>$31,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiva available to lend</td>
<td>$6,850</td>
<td>$7,593</td>
<td>$4,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 25 fund</td>
<td>$6,147</td>
<td>$5,032</td>
<td>$4,906</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Challenges and Strengths**

The following challenges and strengths are based on data from the community survey that the pastoral search committee conducted.

**Challenges:**

**Music.** The Sts. Clare & Francis music ministry has evolved significantly over the years. For most of the 2010s, our music ministry was considered one of our greatest strengths. We had many community members who played various instruments, including piano, guitar, flute, clarinet, and percussion. Those community members banded together to provide beautiful music for our services. Unfortunately, all of those members have since left the community. For a few years, we had a solo music minister who played the piano and sang, but he has recently moved out of state and we are currently without any music ministry. In the survey, 51% of respondents agree that our music needs a lot of work. The community misses the vibrance of the previous music ministry and is hoping to increase member involvement in liturgical music.

**Increasing membership.** As previously discussed, the membership at Sts. Clare & Francis has dwindled over the last five years. Sixty-four percent of respondents in the survey agree there is a need to focus on new member recruitment. As you can see in our member demographics sections, our community is aging, with less than 25% of our membership under the age of 55. This has created significant challenges in ministry as well as stewardship. If the community is going to survive, we need to find a way to publicize SCF to the broader community. We believe that there are many disaffected Roman Catholics and former members of other faith communities are seeking a home that we can offer at SCF. We just need to find a way to connect with them.

**Leadership.** Though not formally included in our survey, one challenge that came out of the subsequent convocation is that our church has only one employee working four hours a week. The rest of SCF leadership is composed of dedicated volunteers. We do not want them to burn out, so support from a pastor will be crucial.

**Other challenges:**

The community also expressed a desire to improve our presence on social media. Currently we have a fairly active Facebook page, but are not present on any other social media platforms. Thirty-five percent of our community says that social media is an unmet need for our congregation. **Note:** We are redoing our website, which will help to rejuvenate SCF’s online presence.

Our community is one full of social-justice minded people. As reported above, we have a couple programs dedicated to providing resources to organizations in the community that align with our values. SCF has expressed a desire to do even more. Thirty-two percent of respondents to the survey say that we need to do a lot of work on our involvement with social justice activities, and 30% say we need an overhaul with stewardship. Many in our community are independently working to advance social justice and we are craving more action as a community.

**Strengths**

SCF’s community is proud of what it has to offer. Notably, the number of strengths identified in our survey vastly exceeded the number of challenges identified. There was also more agreement among respondents about our strengths. Our many strengths are enumerated and expounded upon throughout this profile. We’re particularly proud that the foundational values of our community all show up in our strengths. The following values have flourished and endured at Sts. Clare & Francis:

- 77% of survey respondents agree that SCF excels at inclusion.
- 75% say our collaboration between lay people and clergy is excellent.
- 74% feel our communication is great.
Member Profile

Our community greatly values diversity, but in many ways, we are fairly homogeneous. The vast majority of our members are women, who represent 77% of our community. The majority of our members identify as heterosexual, although approximately one-third identify as gay, lesbian, or bi-sexual, which is very high for a faith community. Over 87% of our members came to the ECC from the Roman Catholic Church, although we do also have members who previously identified as Baptist, Lutheran, Episcopalian and Quaker.

There are a couple of areas where our community really shines. First, there is a lot of loyalty amongst our members. Over 70% have been with the community for at least six years, with 20% being there since the community started. Second, we are a highly educated community. Over 50% of our members hold a graduate degree. This finding surprised our committee when we reviewed the survey results—we don’t consider ourselves an elitist group by any stretch, but we are passionate, dedicated individuals, many of whom have pursued higher degrees later in life.

There is one area of our community demographics that is concerning to some—our age. The community is aging, with 80% of our members over the age of 55, and nearly 50% over the age of 65. As discussed throughout this document, we know that we will need a pastor who can help us recruit younger members to join our community. This will be vital to the long-term success of Sts. Clare & Francis.

Our community comes from all over the metro area to worship together at SCF. On the next page, you’ll find a map that highlights our geographic diversity.
How Our Hosts See Us

We requested perspectives on Sts. Clare & Francis from the Pastors of the churches where we hold services. Here is what they had to say about our community:

From Reverend Wendy Bruner, pastor of Peace United Church of Christ:

Our congregation, our Governing Body and I value the presence of Saints Clare and Francis at Peace United Church of Christ.

Our current president Debbie Gregg was on the church Governing Body when we initially welcomed Saints Clare & Francis to join us in mission to share the Word of God and to make better use of our footprint at 204 E. Lockwood. The two congregations have worked well together, always respectful of each other’s needs and requests. As intended from the beginning, the relationship has not been strictly renter/lessee but, rather, we have collaborated on some ministries, including Lenten services, and welcomed each other to social gatherings. We share many similar values in how we help to do in God’s work in the world. This has led to a butterfly recovery area on the property sponsored by Sts. C&F, joint work on a garden, and many ongoing ministries (food pantry collections, etc.).

We wish our siblings in Christ success in its ongoing ministries and look forward to a long partnership.

Rev. Wendy P. Bruner
Pastor and Teacher
Peace United Church of Christ

From Reverends Keith and Penny Holste, retired pastors of Christ Lutheran Church:

Our time in Webster and with Christ Lutheran was a special time. Part of that was the ecumenical spirit shared by many, and the acquaintances we were able to make due to community use of the Mead Center. In retirement, we were able to attend some services of Sts. Clare and Francis. We enjoyed the experience.

We appreciate the way the congregation and church body are trying to embody many of the best Christian principles which tend to get overlooked or forbidden by the church at large, and the Roman Catholic Church in particular. In some ways the group represents to me the Reformation movement of the 1500’s, and the church always needs to be reforming.

We particularly liked the involvement of lay as well as priests in leadership. We liked the place for all lay members to be able to contribute to the services as they were able, willing, or called on. We liked the social awareness of the group and the willingness to let that awareness show forth in the way all were welcome and various community efforts were supported. It wasn’t for the support of the church as an organization, but for the support of the ministry of Jesus Christ in the world today.

While having a church building can be convenient, it also brings a burden of support and upkeep. The current model of Sts. Clare and Francis using rented space is not always so convenient for the needs of the day, but it does give “mobility”, a freedom to be without so much financial constraint, and an ability to reach out therefore and even take risks because a lot of capital is not at stake.
My own feeling is that the pandemic has changed the way the church will move forward. Zoom will be used more, etc. For a time like this my opinion is that it is a good time to "be light on one's feet" and able to make shifts and changes to relate to the community and its people of faith. Sts. Clare and Francis has done well at this, and I hope new pastoral leadership will encourage it.

We wish you and your group the Spirit's wisdom and faith as you make decisions moving towards the future God has in mind for you.

Wishing you peace in Christ,

Keith and Penny Holste
Living in St. Louis

In many ways, the St. Louis region is defined by its divisions. Geographically, it lies at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. It has been called the northernmost Southern city and the southernmost Northern city. The regional joke is that the first get-acquainted question a St. Louisan will ask is: “Where did you go to high school?” For better or worse, those familiar with the area believe that they can quickly sum up a new acquaintance based on the answer. Today, St. Louis County comprises 91 different municipalities and 22 separate school districts. In addition, many wealthy families in the area choose to send their children to private school. There is no doubt that the region is racially and economically divided. Sts. Clare & Francis is dedicated to being inclusive to all.

Despite the challenges we face, the St. Louis community has much to offer. The city has many distinctive green spaces including Forest Park, one of the largest public parks in the country. St. Louis is known for its food and brewery scene. On South Grand, one will encounter restaurants from a variety of worldwide cuisines including Thai, Ethiopian, Brazilian, Vietnamese, Persian, and more. One will never go without good barbecue, which can be found throughout the city.

St. Louis is home to many family-friendly spaces. Forest Park contains a world-class zoo, an art museum, science center, and history museum, all free to the public. St. Louis also has many opportunities for theater and music lovers: the St. Louis Symphony is among the best in the world. The Muny, the Fabulous Fox, and Stifel Theater are all special places to catch a play or musical. (And the Muny offers free seats at every performance!)

St. Louisans know how to play hard – and study hard. There are several institutions for higher education and research: Washington University, St. Louis University, University of Missouri –St. Louis, Webster University, Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville. St. Louis University and Washington University both have academic medical centers in St. Louis as well. The St. Louis region also continues to experience growth in the healthcare and biotechnology industries, bringing expanded employment opportunities.

The St. Louis community is experiencing strong tensions around racial, social, political, and economic inequality. The area drew national attention in August 2014 when a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri shot and killed unarmed Black teenager, Michael Brown, Jr. Protests erupted following Brown’s death as well as the grand jury decision not to indict the officer responsible for the shooting. Most of the protests were non-violent and transformational, and some of our members have participated actively. The protests birthed an important conversation about regional inequities, and, today, St. Louis is actively engaging in a multi-sector effort to identify, address, and eliminate all racial disparities in the city by 2039, one generation after Brown’s death.