



Covenant Community Church seeks a full-time pastor to lead and serve alongside its members in our continuing legacy of worship, discipleship, and service in our neighborhood of Muskegon Heights, Michigan.

Muskegon Heights is a city of 10,000 people, who fall predominantly in the lower-middle economic category. It is part of Muskegon County, which is on the shores of Lake Michigan with areas of revitalization, a focus on tourism and urban housing, and featuring acclaimed restaurants, arts, parks, and yearly festivals.

The following is a brief description of the responsibilities, as the Consistory has determined and as the Search Team has used:

1. Spiritual:
  - a. Set an example as a mature follower of Jesus.
  - b. Worship, preach, and plan.
  - c. Lead congregation in its worship, discipleship, and mission.
  - d. Officiate weddings, baptisms, funerals, and occasional other services.
2. Pastoral:
  - a. Make visits to homes, hospitals, and care facilities.
  - b. Participate as part of the Home Communion team.
  - c. Be available and present in emergencies.
  - d. Exemplify a hospitable spirit and welcoming character.
  - e. Oversee our continued growth and discovery in unity.
  - f. Embrace Covenant's Journey Inward, Journey Outward, and Journey to Community
3. Mission:
  - a. Be involved in ministries and missions.
  - b. Demonstrate a heart for justice, inclusion, and selfless service.
  - c. Lead us as we envision and discern what's ahead.
4. Administrative:
  - a. Co-lead Consistory.
  - b. Collaborate with Consistory committees.
  - c. Communicate with grace and clarity –verbally, written, and interpersonally.

*(Continued on page 2)*

*In the city "as one who serves."*

134 East Barney Ave., Muskegon Heights, Michigan 49444  
Phone: 231-737-1491 Fax: 231-733-4154  
[www.covenantchurchrca.com](http://www.covenantchurchrca.com)

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We ask you to consider making your next home with us, as we continue our 103<sup>rd</sup> year –and counting—of ministry, worshiping God, and following Jesus, as the Spirit continues to lead us “in the city as one who serves.”

Covenant Community Church invites you to study and respond to our Profile.

Connect with us:

Email: [covenantprofile@gmail.com](mailto:covenantprofile@gmail.com)

Website: [covenantchurchrca.com](http://covenantchurchrca.com)

Church: (231) 737-1491

*Office hours*

*Tues, Wed, Thurs 9 am to 5 pm*



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# Call – RCA Church Profile

## Section A: Background Information

Today's Date: 08/03/23

Position to Be Filled: **Full-Time Pastor**

1. Name of Church: **Covenant Community Church, RCA**
2. Web Address: [www.covenantchurchrca.com](http://www.covenantchurchrca.com)
3. Mailing Address: Covenant Community Church, RCA  
134 East Barney Avenue  
Muskegon Heights, MI 49444  
Phone: 231-737-1491
4. Classis: Muskegon Classis
5. Classis Supervisor: Rev. Dave Kingma  
Church of the Saviour, RCA  
180 68th Avenue, North  
Coopersville, MI 49404  
Phone: 616-997-8050 Email: 1dkingma@gmail.com  
616-997-6654 (h)
6. Search Team Chair(s):

Name:	Doug Hannink	Nancy Peters
Address:	3100 Creekview Ln. Muskegon, MI 49444	913 W. Wellington Ct. Norton Shores, MI 49441

**Apply to Email: [covenantprofile@gmail.com](mailto:covenantprofile@gmail.com)**

7. Membership:	<u>Five Years Ago</u>	<u>Today</u>
Active Confessing Members:	101	75
Inactive Confessing Members:	16	33

### Approximate Ages of Active Members:

0-20 years old:	<u>22%</u>
20-34 years old:	<u>0%</u>
35-49 years old:	<u>8%</u>
50-64 years old:	<u>24%</u>
65 and over:	<u>46%</u>

8. Racial / Ethnic composition of the Congregation:

Caucasian	<u>91%</u>
African American	<u>7%</u>
Hispanic	<u>0%</u>
Asian	<u>2%</u>
Other (Please Specify)	<u>0%</u>

**Significant historical membership note:** From its inception, most of Covenant’s members have been Caucasian, as was the neighborhood up until the early 1960s. In the beginning, most of Covenant’s members lived in Muskegon Heights. But throughout the 60s as part of “White Flight,” the majority of Covenant’s members moved to the suburbs and surrounding cities within Muskegon and Ottawa Counties. **Uniquely, many of these people continued to attend and worship at Covenant.** From that time until today, our membership has consistently included a few Heights residents but mostly people from surrounding West Michigan communities. (See #37 below for more about the Muskegon and Muskegon Heights communities.)

9. Worship Schedule and Attendance (Adults and Children):

Worship has always been held at 10 am each Sunday throughout Covenant’s history.

Avg. attendance 5 yr. ago	100
Avg. in-person attendance today	50
Avg. online attendance today	30

**Significant recent change:** Beginning in March 2020, with the Covid 19 pandemic, weekly worship at Covenant became digital, “love-streamed” via our website, Facebook, and You Tube with hundreds of viewers each week. Musicians and liturgists recorded worship, and our IT expert put it all together every week. We have since resumed in-person worship, and we also continue the livestreaming. Gradually more and more of our members are transitioning back to in-person worship. New members have also joined.

10. Describe a typical worship service (order of worship, music, etc.)

Regular and faithful gathering for Sunday worship grounds us and inspires us to live out our faith throughout the week and beyond. We approach God with centering music, musical invitation, declaration and greeting, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We share the Peace of Christ before we offer prayers of confession, receive words of

assurance, and hear words that guide us in faithful living. We then sing a song of praise, followed by Prayers of the People. We listen for God through God’s Word and Sacraments and respond to God’s word with gratitude through our offerings, sending song, and benediction. The sacrament of Holy Communion is celebrated monthly and children are welcome to the table. Holy Baptism is celebrated when requested. Worship is available in person or virtually via our website, Facebook, and You Tube.

<https://covenantchurchrca.com/sermons/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/covenantchurchrca>  
<https://www.youtube.com/@covenantcommunitychurchrca456/streams>

**See attached Bulletin example.**

11. Financial information: **See attached recent Consistorial Report and Annual General Fund Budget.**

Total mission contributions to the RCA:	<u>\$ 0</u>	<u>5yr. Ago</u>	<u>\$ 0</u>	<u>Today</u>
Total contributions to other missions:	<u>\$14,070</u>	<u>5yr. Ago</u>	<u>\$ 6,382</u>	<u>Today</u>

Percentage of total budget contributed by living donors (include recent annual budget)

<u>90-100%</u>	<u>x</u>
<u>75-89%</u>	
<u>60-74%</u>	
<u>45-59%</u>	
<u>44% or less</u>	

Congregational Giving: Approximate percentage of annual contributions.

<u>Less than \$500</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>\$501-\$1500</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>\$1501- \$2500</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>\$2501 - \$3500</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>More than \$3500</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>%</u>

12. Financial assistance: Do you receive financial assistance beyond the congregation? (rents, etc.) **No**

List other fundraising programs that support the church:

Grant applications: Various grants have been sought and received throughout the years. We will continue to seek all types of grants in the future.

Covenant Extended: This effort reaches out to previous members and nonmember supporters who continue to donate to Covenant Community Church.

Auction for Missions: The annual Covenant Auction for Missions was brought into existence more than 20 years ago to serve as a vehicle to provide funding for Covenant's missions within the community (Supper House, Summer Recreation Program, Hygiene Pantry, Family Promise, and most recently - Seeds of Hope Community Garden). The auction is a night of much laughter, enjoyment, and refreshments for all in attendance.



Businesses and individuals donate items, dinners, trips, and experiences to be auctioned off in the raffle, silent auction, and live auction... something for everyone! Several hours of enjoyment raise thousands of dollars (at each and every auction), providing funding for our important mission work.

### 13. Children's Sunday Education—"Children in Worship"

Average attendance:            5yrs. Ago: 10-12            Today: 4-6

**Comment on significant changes:** After the pandemic, it took some time to figure out what participation we would have, who would be available to be leaders, and what programs we would resume. Some children aged out during that time, and some families developed new routines and were no longer attending regularly.

### 14. Describe all educational programs. Include all ages:

We pray for help in discerning programs and activities that will serve and inspire the current generation of children who have experienced not only the pandemic but also the challenging themes and social issues of today.

Elementary age: In the fall of 2022 there was a concerted effort to launch a post-Covid education program. But it became apparent people weren't quite ready to dive back in. Leaders, families, and children were not coming forward to participate. But 2023 came with new energy, and our past education leader re-launched our "Children in Worship" program (aka CIW) for 4-6 regular attendees. Because of the small numbers, it feels like a one-room schoolhouse, with ages ranging from preschool to 6th grade.

CIW is a Bible-based curriculum where the goal is to present the stories of God with age-appropriate terms and materials and encourage the children to wonder and explore their responses to the stories. Children in Worship follows the church calendar in its story sequence—teaching and recognizing the 4 seasons of the church as well as connecting weekly to the sermon theme that is delivered to the adult congregation on Sunday mornings.



Middle and high school age: We don't currently have a program for teens, as our current attendance at church by this small group is not frequent. Some of our teens are staying connected by serving in our nursery and alongside our CIW leader as assistants, and some are serving in the sound room in support of weekly worship. In the past, our youth group has taken service and soul-building trips to various parts of our nation.



Adult Education: Three Sundays a month, with the exception of Communion Sunday, Adult Education is offered right after worship and Fellowship time and is well attended. This is an opportunity to grow in our faith and also learn about our community and those we serve. Weekly topics are led by our pastor, a Covenant member, or a guest speaker. A sampling of topics we've discussed in addition to scripture are: racism, social justice, fostering and adoption, compassionate communication, health/psychological/spiritual wellness, opportunities for service, as well as issues pertinent to the RCA and the role of church in our culture.



15. Church groups and organizations: (Briefly describe ministry purpose of each group)

**Hygiene Pantry Ministry:** Since 2002, 10-20 volunteers have met on the last Tuesday of every month at Covenant Church, providing basic hygiene products not covered under the Michigan SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and assisting 75-100+ neighbors and community members. In addition to the products, it has been a ministry of hospitality, generosity, and building friendships. Since the pandemic (when the pantry



was closed for a year), the hygiene products are passed out at the door, and numbers served have decreased to about 40-50 families. We hope to get out into our surrounding neighborhood in person to encourage neighbors to come back.

**Healing Prayer Ministry:** James 5:14 invites us to gather for healing prayer: “Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.” These services have been held over the years for both members and neighbors.

**Communion Ministry:** Every first Sunday is Communion Sunday, and the table is extended into the Fellowship Hall for a shared potluck meal. Begun in 2016, the distribution of home communion is an extension of the Lord's Supper using the juice and bread from worship to those, such as the sick and the homebound, who are unable to celebrate with the congregation. A communion visit serves as a visible sign of Christ's ministry of care and healing and a connection to the congregation reminding us that we are the body of Christ. Visiting communion celebrants are carefully selected and trained for this ministry. A team of eight volunteers presently serve.

**The Band:** The Band is a source of great joy for Covenant Church. We are singers, pianists, violinists, guitarists, bass players, ukulele players, percussionists, and more. We thrive on playing and singing music from many sources and styles and from all over the world. We may do some old-time favorites, and we're always on the lookout for fresh, new, ecumenical and inclusive songs. Covenant has always been a very musical place, and the Band is a big part of it all!

**The Choir:** The Choir has been a fixture during our morning worship since Covenant was founded. Many members and visitors note that our choir is small but has a big sound! The choir enjoys singing a broad array of musical styles and sings two times a month from September through May.

*Band*



*Choir*



**Prayer Shawl Ministry:** This is a group of 3-5 knitters who, prior to Covid, met monthly in each other's homes. Knitters make projects independently, praying for the recipient while knitting. Sometimes the shawls are requested directly by people in need of prayer; other times the group members identify and knit for someone in need, within and outside the congregation. When the shawl or item is complete, the group prays over it together (sometimes virtually) before it is presented to the recipient. Knitting and praying continued during the pandemic, and in 2022 the group gradually began to resume in-person meetings.

**Fair Trade Coffee Ministry:** Covenant members donate to fund the fair trade coffee served on Sundays, as we partner with ALDEA COFFEE MUSKEGON, a local fair trade company that buys the beans directly from Honduran farmers at a very fair price. A group of 7 members (the Aldea Brew Crew ) take turns brewing the coffee for fellowship after worship each Sunday as well as for other events. [aldeacoffee.com](http://aldeacoffee.com)

**Funeral Ministry:** Our Office Administrator is the church contact with the grieving family and connects them with a member of the recently formed Funeral Committee (5 persons) who provide comfort and assist with details of both the service and, if desired, a funeral luncheon. It is in these situations that Covenant Hospitality is most evident—comforting and assisting families at a most difficult and painful time.

**Kitchen Ministry:** Group members set up the Fellowship Hall and coordinate monthly shared meals on Communion Sundays and assist for other celebrations and gatherings.

**Soundroom Ministry** (much expanded during the Pandemic): Our soundroom techs provide weekly audio/video assistance in the sanctuary as well as virtually for our “love stream” each Sunday morning. A team of 4 adults and 2 teens share the responsibility.

**Hospitality Ministry:** Covenant members volunteer to host partnering, non-profit community organizations who utilize our space for classes, meetings, and other events held throughout the week. Hospitality is “a part of Covenant’s DNA” ... a gift of the Spirit that is shared with all who walk through our inclusive and ecumenical doors. For example, Read Muskegon provides ELL (English as a Learned Language) classes. Community meetings and forums are always welcome.

16. Comment on one event, or experience, over the last year that has significantly contributed to the spiritual life of the congregation.

## Our Centennial Celebration!!

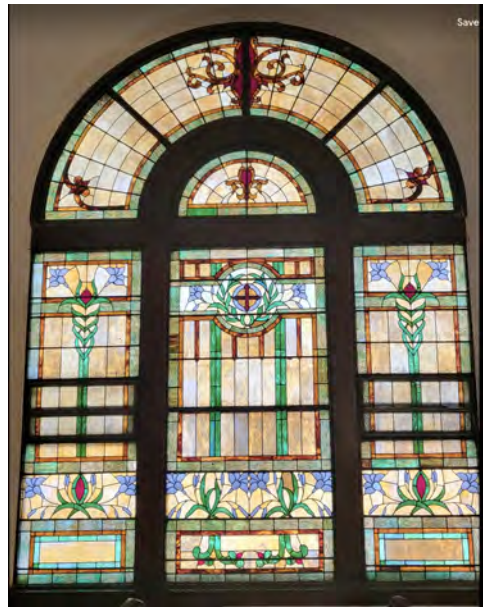
Due to the global Covid pandemic, our original plans were replaced by a glorious virtual worship service on May 17, 2020. Four former ministers along with Pastor Mark inspired all who were watching the “love stream” with their pre-taped messages. Joyful music and liturgy was abundant, as all participated from their homes, filled with gratitude, love, and hope. The Covenant Fellowship Hall remains filled with photos and memories of both this celebration and our subsequent celebration of Pastor Mark’s retirement on Sept. 30, 2022, and his beautiful final worship on Oct. 2, 2022, World Communion Day.

It must be added that the months since our pastor’s retirement have been ones of sadness and loss but also ones of discovery and development of spiritual gifts in our Covenant family (a new liturgy team, excellent homilies, new committee members, additional collaborations with community organizations/ministries). Our previous pastors’ leadership created a deep community focus, commitment to prayer, discipleship, worship, and service. The “Priesthood of all Believers” model, which Covenant has nurtured throughout its history, has resulted in excellent lay leadership.

17. Buildings: Please describe church-owned or rented buildings and their purpose.

Covenant Community Church owns the church building and property at 134 East Barney Avenue, Muskegon Heights, MI 49444, without debt. Covenant also owns adjoining lots. These parcels were purchased by Covenant—or by others and donated to Covenant—as they became available in recent years after the razing of condemned homes. Owning these lots was seen as an opportunity to create and maintain cared-for green spaces that also would be available for future development for community or church-based use.

Main corner lot at 134 E. Barney	Purpose:	Primary church building
Leahy lot adjacent to main lot	Purpose:	Seeds of Hope Community Garden/ pavilion/gathering/meditation
Lot west of alley	Purpose:	Storage of snow removed from the parking lots
Lot across Leahy	Purpose:	Parking
SW corner lot at Leahy and Barney	Purpose:	Peace garden for meditation



18. Do you plan any capital expenditures during the next five years? **Yes**

We are currently planning for the following: roof repairs, steeple repair, new boiler, new carpet, plaster repair.

19. Is there any mortgage indebtedness? **No**

20. Pastor's study location: **Church**

21. List of all paid staff in addition to the pastor:

Office Administrator	Part-Time
Music Director/Accompanist	Part-Time
Custodian	Part-Time
Nursery Attendants	Part-Time

22. Consistory Membership: What method is used in selecting members?

At our Spring Congregational Meeting, outgoing consistory members cast lots out of a double slate of candidates approved by the congregation who have been nominated by the consistory (with consent of the person).

**Present consistory members (Office Held, Gender, Occupation):**

Elder	Female	Non-Profit Executive Director
Elder	Female	Retired Massage Therapist
Elder	Male	Teacher
Elder	Female	Retired Family Court Investigator
Elder	Female	Retired Teacher
Elder	Female	Retired Teacher

Deacon	Male	Retired Funeral Director
Deacon	Male	Retired Engineer
Deacon	Male	Retired Pharmacist
Deacon	Male	Chemist
Deacon	Male	Construction Supervisor
Deacon	Male	Machinist

23. What leadership roles do women currently fill in your church?

Of the 12 consistory members, 5 are women, including the Consistory President and Vice President. Miriam Bush, Minister Emerita, provides a variety of spiritual services to the congregation and the community. Other positions held by women: Office Administrator, Choir Director, Soundroom Manager, Education Superintendent, and the Personnel Team (2). Several of our Ministry Groups are led by women, including the Seeds of Hope Garden (2), the Hygiene Pantry, the Fair Trade Coffee Ministry, the Prayer Shawl Ministry, and the Hospitality Ministry.

#### 24. Education levels in our congregation...

Covenant's members represent a wide variety of educational levels. Most members have 12 years of formal education. Many have education beyond high school.

#### 25. Economic levels In our congregation...

Covenant's members represent a wide variety of skills, careers, experiences, and socioeconomic levels.

#### 26. Pastoral special training/experience desired?

A heart for urban ministry is a must (preferably with experience, but not required). Also, CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) training is a plus. Our pastor needs to be:

- Mature and grounded in the Christian faith.
- A collaborative, servant leader to walk alongside us.
- A biblical teacher who proclaims: God loves us; Christ is for us; the Holy Spirit calls us.
- One who will help us navigate the changes in the RCA at the national, Synod, and Classis levels—what is and what will/might be.

#### 27. Should your pastor be fluent in any language other than English? Yes      **No**

#### 28-31. Salary, benefits, and business expenses:

Covenant is prepared to offer these in accordance with the Muskegon Classis/Great Lakes Synod standards.

<https://www.rca.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Minimum-Salary-Guidelines-2023-Synod-of-the-Great-Lakes.pdf>

There is no parsonage, so a housing allowance will be given. Covenant is willing to adjust the components of the salary and benefits package to address the needs/desires of the new pastor such that the package remains the same in total.

#### 32. Collaborative ministries: In what ways have you cooperated with other churches or non-profit ministries in your community during the past year?

**Benedictine Mornings:** A women's study group based on The Rule of St. Benedict and led by Rev. Miriam Bush through the *Center for Spirituality, Action, and Transformation* (C-SAT) has been meeting since 2009. More recently, 20 women met one Saturday morning each month from Sept -Dec. 2022, then 13 women participated in the second

session Jan.- May, 2023. In addition twelve women participated in a 4-day spring retreat at The Our Lady of Grace Benedictine Monastery in Indiana March 23 - 26th, 2023.

**Annual Good Friday noon service:** Covenant Community Church participates in a noon communal prayer service with other churches in the Muskegon area on Good Fridays. The 2023 service was at Lake Harbor Methodist Church on April 7.

**Supper House:** Volunteers meet monthly on the fourth Thursday 3:30 - 5:30 to provide 6 volunteers at Supper House, located at Temple Methodist Church in Muskegon Heights. Covenant also contributes monetarily each year. Hot meals are served Monday through Saturday to our neighbors and members of the Muskegon Heights community year-round. [www.templeumc.info/supper-house](http://www.templeumc.info/supper-house)

**healthCARE (Christian Advocacy Referral and Education):** Housed at Covenant since the 1980's, healthCare continues to provide services throughout the Muskegon Heights community. healthCare is led by a nurse/director, and lay health workers provide services in the home and also in places such as churches, schools, and community centers. healthCare also provides free blood pressure screenings and health education at our monthly Hygiene Pantry and during other neighborhood gatherings at Covenant throughout the year.

**Crop Hunger Walk:** Since the beginning, over 40 years ago, Covenant has walked alongside Church World Service in the fight against hunger in our city and globe. Members from Covenant walk a variety of routes, and others pledge generously. Last year Covenant raised over \$3,000. The walk is always on World Wide Communion Sunday, the first Sunday of October.

33. Community involvement: In what community programs or projects have you participated during the past year?

**READ MUSKEGON** offers ELL (English as a Learned Language) classes from 10am - 12 every Tuesday and Wednesday mornings in Covenant's Fellowship Hall.



**READ MUSKEGON** also offers 12-week Young Family Empowerment Programs on Tuesday nights, 5:00 - 7:30 pm, in Covenant's Fellowship Hall.  
[www.readmuskegon.org](http://www.readmuskegon.org)

**Barney Maffett "Us Cafe"** – The Barney Maffett Coffee Shop, only 2 short blocks from Covenant Church and a former ministry of Covenant, was purchased from Covenant in 2021 by Kaja Thornton-Hunter for her non-profit, **Overcoming Barriers**. The site became the "Us Cafe" and has rapidly become a gathering space for neighbors to connect, collaborate, mentor, and meet up with community leaders over food and Aldea fair trade coffee. Gardeners from Covenant's Seeds of Hope Community Garden share produce at the Cafe's produce stand. We are excited and hopeful about the Cafe's expanded involvement in garden activities in the future.  
[www.theuscafe.com](http://www.theuscafe.com) [www.overcomingbarriersinc.com](http://www.overcomingbarriersinc.com)



**Seeds of Hope Community Garden** is a collaborative effort between Covenant and the non-profit Coalition for Community Development (CCD). 2023 will be the 7th season for the garden, located next to Covenant Church in Muskegon Heights. Gardeners from the church and the neighborhood gather on Tuesdays 5:30 - 7pm and Thursdays 10 - 11am to work in the raised beds. In addition to healthy food, there's good fellowship, greater understanding, and relationship building for all who participate. Harvested produce is



shared with the neighborhood at “Us Cafe” and its sponsoring non-profit, Overcoming Barriers.



**Free Gardening Classes for neighbors** (also a collaborative effort with CCD) is a series of three classes held at Covenant every other spring. The classes are taught by two Master Gardeners and cover basics to advanced gardening, with lots of freebies, classes, door prizes, samples, and recipe-sharing. The series is well attended by both neighbors and members.

**Growing Community** is a collaborative effort among all the community gardens in the greater Muskegon area. Pre-Covid, gardeners met at alternating gardens to learn and share with each other. We hope to do more of this in the 2023 gardening season.

34. What denominations, or religions, are present in the general vicinity of where your church is located?

Temple United Methodist, New Jerusalem Baptist and numerous other Baptist churches, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Seventh Day Adventist, Solid Rock Church of the Apostolic Faith, Faith Tabernacle, Phillip Chapel

35. What is your strategy to reach unchurched people in your community?

Many of our African American neighbors are already involved in their own churches. For 103 years and counting, welcome and inclusion in all of our church activities, service in the community, good food, and hospitality have been grounded in our welcoming statement. We are a Missional church.

36. The income level in our congregation tends to be:

Somewhat below the surrounding community	Yes	No
About average for the surrounding community	Yes	No
Somewhat higher than the surrounding community	Yes	No

37. Describe the community and the school system (provide website links where appropriate).

The answer to this question is complicated and multi-fold.

#### Greater Muskegon Community Description:

Covenant Community Church, RCA, is located in the city of Muskegon Heights, a community of approximately 10,000 people, which is a part of the greater metropolitan area of Muskegon, a county of about 100,000 people on the Western Michigan shores of Lake Michigan. Muskegon Heights and the surrounding areas have close access to Lake Michigan, Muskegon Lake, and many smaller nearby lakes, which attract thousands of visitors annually. Sports and recreation are available in all seasons including hunting, fishing, boating, biking, and hiking. The greater Muskegon area is experiencing a revitalized downtown with much new urban housing and tourist development, as well as many dining, arts, and shopping options.

#### Muskegon Heights Community History and Description:

As discussed earlier in this document, in the 1960's many white residents moved from Muskegon Heights as part of "White Flight," and the neighborhood make-up became primarily African-American. Manufacturing companies began leaving the Muskegon area around this same time, and a rapid decline of the economic and social well-being of Muskegon Heights began.

Today, Muskegon Heights is an at-risk community with serious urban challenges, but our neighborhood is full of hopeful people. Covenant Community Church has intentionally stayed on this corner in Muskegon Heights to be "In the City as One Who Serves." Covenant is the only RCA church that remains in the city of Muskegon Heights.

<https://www.Muskegon-mi.gov>

<https://muskegonheights.us/>

<https://data.census.gov/table?q=population+in+muskegon+heights,+MI&tid=ACSST5Y2021.S1101>

<https://data.census.gov/table?q=population+in+muskegon+heights,+MI&tid=ACSST5Y2021.S1901>

#### School System

The majority of Covenant's members live outside of Muskegon Heights and, as such, represent many different Muskegon County school districts other than Muskegon Heights.

Muskegon Heights Public School Academy <https://www.mhtigers.org> is presently facing many challenges, with a good deal of students who live in the Muskegon Heights district taking advantage of school of choice options in the area.

38. Record of the last four Pastors:

Rev. Mark Bush	1984 to 2022
Rev. Miriam Bush	1984 to 2009
Rev. Eugene Sutton	1981 to 1986
Rev. Bruce Menning	1970 to 1983

39. Please download and complete the [RCA Pastor profile form](#) and submit the form and/or your resume to: [CovenantProfile@gmail.com](mailto:CovenantProfile@gmail.com)

## Section B: Reflections

1. Stated Mission/Vision/Purpose of our congregation:

***In the city 'as one who serves'... affirming and welcoming all as Jesus, with doors and hearts open wide, joining together to 'do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God'***

2. Our Goals for the next five years (Example: new programs or outreach ministries).

- Live out our mission statement in new and powerful ways.
- Strengthen our online platform and reach to the public.
- Strengthen our youth ministry.
- Welcome guests from the greater West Michigan community and invite continued participation in order for guests to understand and join in the vision of Covenant.
- Work through whatever biases we have toward race, sexual orientation, socioeconomics, gender, and other marginalized groups even though it might be uncomfortable.
- Collaborate with other area churches in worship and service.
- Connect with community leaders to strengthen our community. Host more community gatherings indoors and outdoors.
- Be strong disciples of Jesus. We understand that discipleship equips us to worship and serve God. We desire continued spiritual growth via prayer, scripture, small groups, and education for children and adults.
- With all hands on deck, build on our strong foundation of service with new ways to serve in the church and in the community alongside our neighbors.
- Address the infrastructure needs so that our building will continue to be a place of warm welcome and hospitality.
- Continue to emphasize our journey inward in discipleship and worship, outward into the community in service and justice, and toward one another in the creation of community amongst us. <https://covenantchurchrca.com/the-journey-inward/>
- Grow our attendance and impact.

3. Describe the strengths of your church, the best of what you are as a community, and what you can offer a new pastor:

**Covenant's spiritual DNA includes qualities that have made us who we are and that will carry us into the future:**

- “Walking humbly with God”-- In mutual love, demonstrated by prayer, we are open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in being faithful to God’s call, and God has been faithful to us.
- Our journey is taking us inward in discipleship and worship, outward into the community in service and justice, and toward one another in the creation of community amongst us. Over time we are growing deeper and wider.
- We have been blessed with the right pastors, at the right time, coupled with strong lay leadership. We know we are here by God’s grace and goodness.
- We love music and celebrate it in all its forms with organ and piano, violin, guitar, ukulele, and of course singing. Worship is our act to God.
- We are mighty in our generosity of time, talent, and treasure.
- We are people of prayer, of fellowship, of joy, and of love, unified such that we can agree to disagree.
- We are a community of learners, always seeking the wisdom of God’s Word for these times, the wisdom of prophets, theologians, and our shared experiences.
- As we practice servanthood, these are a few ways we’ve reached out to each other and our beloved community: Adult Ed, Hygiene Pantry, Seeds of Hope Community Garden, and healthCARE.
- We have been a place of hospitality, welcome, and inclusion since our inception, and we are now an ecumenical community. We have been reminded, “The more diverse we are, the more complete we are.”
- We remain a hopeful community of faith, even after all that we, our community, our country, and the world have faced in the past 103 years.

From the Covenant Community Church Website homepage “About Us”:

Covenant Reformed Church was organized on May 15, 1920. As the pages from the historical account *Covenant Chronicles* attest, there is very little written about our beautiful building, because at Covenant, the emphasis has been on people and ministry. The church is not a building. Covenant Community Church is people, and our church is ministry. Throughout Covenant’s history, the common threads of worship, education, music, rich fellowship, and authentic servanthood weave together a tapestry of deep gratitude.

Covenant has traveled through many challenging hills and valleys over all its years, and there seems to be a consensus that she always had the right pastor at the right time. The relationship between pastor and congregation has typically been strong and positive,

and we understand that this relationship is a primary reason that Covenant has traversed those hills and valleys with a strong sense of faith, purpose, and grace.

In 1920, the citizens of Muskegon Heights were largely working-class people. Many had emigrated quite recently from eastern and southeastern Europe; a fairly large segment came from western Europe including the Dutch, German, English, and Scandinavians, and a very few were from minority groups. So, we have been diverse and inclusive from our outset, and mission-oriented as a result. Several transition points stand out in the history of Covenant Church, including the challenges associated with the great depression, World War II and its aftermath, and the transition from the economic security of the years following World War II, to the transition and subsequent uncertainties of the sixties and seventies. In short, our neighborhood changed dramatically. What was once stable and middle class is now very poor and at-risk. Today Covenant Church remains in place, still connected to the community that birthed us.

<https://covenantchurchrca.com/>

4. Explain the strategies or ideas that most excite your church in becoming or remaining missional:

Here is how God equipped and empowered us: In the mid-century transition that sent most white, middle-class churches off to the suburbs, Covenant, by the grace of God, found its defining call to be: In the city “as one who serves.” So now, while we lift up our call to worship, learn, pray, and care, we also thank God for the call to keep incarnational ministry constantly before our eyes and in our hearts. Diversity and inclusion are at the core of our very being. Proclaiming and sharing God’s love is who we are.

It is a call to share the compassion of Jesus. Jesus had compassion for those left out of the mainstream. We pray we are always breaking down walls so we may continue our threefold Journey: Inward, Outward, and toward building Community.

Covenant was very active in RICE (Reformed Inner City Experience) with other Reformed churches in the decade of the 1970’s. Programs included Latchkey, Reading, Meals on Wheels, senior meals, adult daytime high school, food and clothing closet, jail and correctional institution services, and much more. It's worth revisiting some of these ideas again as the identified issues have persisted and often worsened. And there may be funding available to support this again.

5. Explain three of your church's most passionate hopes and why they are significant:

We hope to find a pastor who will help us move forward and continue to help build the realm of God in very challenging times for all denominations. We trust in God to send us a pastor who will continue serving and leading us into the times ahead.

We hope to continue our journey inward, outward, and toward community in all the ways God has planned for us.

From our living hope in Jesus Christ, we will love God, our neighbors, and ourselves to develop unity of purpose in a culture that is all too often divisive and hateful.

6. How do you hope someone who is a guest at your church would describe what he/she perceived as most important to Covenant?

The warm genuine welcome and hospitality that Covenant shares with all who enter its doors is a top priority! Here are some examples of comments received:

"We enjoy the inclusivity and sense of community we find at Covenant. We always feel welcomed and valued."

A new member said, "We have been Reformed Church members for decades and became discouraged. We felt very welcomed on our first visit to Covenant. The hospitality continued at a level we never experienced before. We feel so loved and accepted. The "all means all" mindset is active every time we enter the doors."

One new member couple came to Covenant on the recommendation of their daughter. Among many reasons, they say that "the liturgy, singing, and message of inclusive grace from the pastor drew us in." They appreciate "the management of Covid and love streaming of worship, the journey inward and outward, an ecumenical celebration of approaching God in worship, the primacy of the Gospel, and the sense of wonder and wondering."

7. We pray for a pastor...

...who is a champion for our cause to keep our church and our aging building in the city as one who serves.

8. Our vision and hopes for our new pastor over the next 5 years are...

...to help us heal from the effects of the isolation and division of the pandemic; to help us discover who God is calling us to be now, at this time and in this place; to continue Covenant's long and rich history of worship, service, and hospitality into the next generation and beyond; to connect with the congregation, the sick, the homebound, and our neighbors; and last but not least, to navigate Covenant through the changes within the RCA.

9. Most importantly, we would like potential new pastors to know these CORE VALUES that guide Covenant in all that we do.

\*Commitment to our neighbors

\*Ecumenism

\*Inclusion/diversity

\*Music and liturgy

\*Priesthood of all believers

\*Intentional hospitality

\*Social justice