

PROPOSAL FOR CLERGY RENEWAL
Cotuit Federated Church
On Behalf of Rev. Angela Menke Ballou

PART A: Program Rationale and Design

A-1 Summary: Cotuit Federated Church and our Pastor, Rev. Angela Menke Ballou, are filled with hope and joy at the possibility of participating in the National Clergy Renewal Program. Following ten years of successful and life-giving shared ministry, this will allow Pastor Angie and the congregation to rest and reflect on God's call for the next season of ministry together. The theme of the sabbatical time is based on the words of Ephesians 3: 16-19 which reads in part: "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love... so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." There will be opportunities to be rooted in prayer and love, to explore familial and scriptural family trees, and to renew Pastor and Congregation that we might be filled deeply with God's love and vision to bear good fruit.

A-2 Rationale: The past few years have been challenging and rewarding for Pastor Angie and the Cotuit Federated Church (CFC). To continue the church's growth and sustain the pastor's strength for dedicated leadership, we are seeking this grant to provide a fulfilling and renewing sabbatical.

In early 2010, CFC adopted a new church governance focused on spiritual giftedness and coming alive in God. The Tree of Life is our visual representation of this model of ministry. Our governance teams form strong roots steeped in faith, which support and allow the limbs, branches, and buds of our individual and small group ministries to reach upward and outward. This creates a vital, lively church family. God, our ultimate source of nourishment, shines over and infuses the Tree with love. We are a little church with a great big heart, and we strive to ground ourselves in our mission to serve others, seek justice and walk humbly before our God.

In 2011 Pastor Angie began her ministry at CFC by getting to know us through a series of one-on-one conversations with our members. This process gave her insight and wisdom to shepherd us through a visioning process beginning in 2012 and culminating in the adoption of our guiding document *Walking in the Way of Jesus: A Spiritual Blueprint and Strategic Plan* in 2015. The core values which emerged from our congregational discernment are to be Grounded in Gratitude, Spiritually Alive, Beloved Community, and Christ's Hands.

Our vision led us to become an Open and Affirming/Reconciling Church in 2016. Our unanimous congregational vote made explicit our welcome to all regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family structure, faith background, doubts, abilities, or economic circumstances. Here all are beloved, beautiful, strong children of God.

In 2016, we also began to assess our need to expand our physical structure. To make a long and amazing story short, over the past six years we have raised 3.6 million dollars of our projected 3.9-million-dollar goal. This is 18 times our annual giving. We are currently pouring footings and foundations for our expanded sanctuary and new community hall.

In 2018, amid the planning process for this expansion project, Pastor Angie was diagnosed with breast cancer. This diagnosis came two weeks before she led a delegation of nineteen from our church community to the Holy Land. After returning home, Angie received cancer treatments over several long and difficult months. The church and Pastor Angie grew closer as we cared for one another during this time of clarity about what is most important. Part of the church's rationale in applying for this grant is to recognize the health challenges that Pastor Angie faced over the past five years and give her space to heal – physically, mentally, and spiritually.

In 2020, along with the whole world, we responded to the global pandemic. Pastor Angie and our Music Director did yeoman's work of pivoting from in-person to online worship

seamlessly. This required a tremendous amount of work, energy, and a steep technological learning curve. Disorienting, chaotic, exhausting, and deeply transformative are apt descriptions of the past two years. Our congregation has lacked for nothing in consistent, nourishing, meaningful worship experiences. We continued to provide brown bag lunches three times a month out of the church building while the shelters closed; our Deacons stayed in touch with everyone in the congregation; our kids sent cards and kindness rocks to our elders; and through livestreams and endless Zooms we found new ways to worship, pray, study the Bible, support one another, and get the business of the church done. This was all made possible by the incredible wisdom, creativity, love, and dedication of Pastor Angie.

We recently unearthed a time capsule from the 1941 expansion; it was tucked behind the cornerstone like a love note from our ancestors in faith. Eighty years later, the congregation has broken ground in a full-scale building expansion, scheduled to be completed in October 2022. As we settle into our new space, we will intentionally take time for rest and renewal. The year of 2023 will be a time of deep integration, renewal, and visioning both for Pastor Angie and CFC. Our little church with a great big heart will take time to ground itself in both ancestral and familial roots while exploring the roots of our faith. Our relationship with God will be deepened and strengthened. We will emerge from this time of rest and renewal with the enthusiasm and the energy to move forward in our mission to be Christ's Hands in our community.

A-3 Narrative of the Sabbatical Leave: The Sabbatical will be a four-month leave, half the time spent at home and half the time traveling. The travel will give space for Pastor Angie's heart to sing in two ways: by connecting with holy ground and by connecting with her familial roots – ancestors both of scripture and biology, family both of blood and choice.

The time at home will be an opportunity for Pastor Angie to rest and renew. This will be four weeks at the beginning (May 22-June 17) and most of four weeks (August 22-Sept 22) at the end of the sabbatical with smaller pockets of time at home between travels. There will be space for reading and cooking meals for her family. There will be time for daily walks in the woods or by the sea. An extra month was added to allow ample space for sleep, rest and relaxation so that the Sabbatical will truly be a time of renewal and grounding.

Holy Ground: Grand Lake, CO, June 18-24 – Every year since 2005, Pastor Angie has gathered with 11 seminary classmates, the Spirit Lake Sisters, at Grand Lake, CO. This intentionally diverse and deeply spiritual circle holds space for their deepest and most true selves. These gatherings and relationships give grounding that enables ministry to be sustainable.

Family Ancestry: Indiana, Georgia, and Virginia, June 26-July 8 – The family time will begin with a driving trip to see Pastor Angie’s and her husband’s parents who live in Indiana, Georgia, and Virginia. She would like to spend time with each set of their parents looking at family photos and sharing stories – an opportunity for intentional conversations about family history.

Family Adventure: Paris & Disneyland Paris, July 17-20 – When Pastor Angie was a girl, she watched the building of a theme park on the Disney Channel. Young Angie dreamed of working at Disney, and she did. Completing her undergraduate degree in Engineering, she worked at Walt Disney World. Recently, her son was similarly inspired watching a documentary about Disney. The family will begin their time in Europe with a first-time visit to Disneyland Paris.

Family Ancestry: Germany and Scotland, July 21-August 12 – The time with extended family earlier in the sabbatical will set the stage for the capstone travel to Germany and Scotland to explore Pastor Angie and her husband’s respective ancestral homelands. Pastor Angie has been studying Bowen Family Systems for nine years, so this will be an integration of long years of

engaged thinking about this topic. In Germany, Pastor Angie has connections with both maternal and paternal relatives and will be able to visit her paternal side's homestead. Time will also be spent with lifelong friends made through a youth faith exchange in the 1990s. In Scotland, she will go to the MacPherson ancestral lands of her husband.

Holy Ground: Iona Community, Scotland, August 13-21 – Pastor Angie will stay an additional week without her family to worship and renew on the island of Iona with clergy colleagues. Pastor Angie's prayer life has been shaped by the liturgies born from Iona, and she is thrilled to travel to this "thin place," described as having only a tissue paper separating the material world and the spiritual world.

Holy Ground: Acadia National Park, Maine, September 1-4 – Pastor Angie's family spent her first sabbatical in 2017 traveling across the country to National Parks. Returning to Acadia during this sabbatical will touch on that earlier sabbatical which was a foundational reset for her family. This also connects with a childhood family practice of camping on long weekends.

Narrative Leave Summary – These opportunities will allow Pastor Angie to feel more rooted and grounded following such enormous years of leadership involving the weight of decision-making during the pandemic and the intensity of fundraising and construction for our building expansion project. The church will also engage in a time of rest and reflection. They will have the opportunity to hear new voices in worship leadership. There will be openings for members to explore their own family histories. It will also be an opportunity to bless our new space that it might be a place where people experience the love of God, touching them in deep and healing ways.

A-4 Pastor's Statement of Intended Benefits: This period of ministry has required at times more than I felt was possible. I have been stretched to what I thought were my limits – and

then another wave of pandemic, injustice, or violence arrived. I am so grateful for a chance to lay down the mantle of service, to disconnect from the onslaught of news, and to rest from decision-making. This sabbatical will be a time of rooting myself in new practices of prayer and self-care that will keep me resilient and strong for the next stage of ministry. It will be a chance to find and stand on holy ground. I want to spend time napping and reading and hiking. I want to gather with beloved friends and family to laugh and share stories and be supported. I want to see my son stand in his ancestral homeland and nurture his own sense of history and glimpse his vision for the future. This is the last opportunity that our family will have for a sabbatical while our son still lives at home. When I return to our congregation, I will be well-rested and grounded, so that together we can listen for the still, small voice of God guiding us into our next stage of shared ministry.

A-5 Congregation's Statement of Intended Benefits: This next year will be a time of amazing change and a time for CFC to cherish the wonders that God is working in our midst. As we literally see our new sanctuary and fellowship hall being built and as we prepare for Pastor Angie's sabbatical, our spirits are filled with joy, excitement, and possibility!

Pastor Angie's sabbatical will allow us to pause deeply and renew ourselves through prayer and worship. We will continue the process of sharing our ideas, hopes and dreams of where God is calling us. We will explore our personal families of origin and our church's great cloud of witnesses. We will have space to delve into our roots as a seafaring village connected both to our European ancestors and to the indigenous peoples of the Wampanoag tribe.

We will have the time and space to connect and reconnect with each other as we continue to emerge from the isolation of the pandemic, and we will rekindle our experience of "being church" together. When Pastor Angie returns, we will be rested, recharged and ready to move forward in our shared ministry. May it be so!

A-6 Plans for Covering Pastoral Functions, Leave Taking and Return: We will have a Sabbatical Pastor who covers Pastor Angie’s leave and who provides CFC with preaching and pastoral care. This coverage will be included in our grant budget. This season will provide us with a period to pause deeply after the intense work of building our new physical structure and navigating our way through the global pandemic. We will bless Pastor Angie as she goes on sabbatical and celebrate together as she returns. The return service will be led by her sister-friend, Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser, who joined our congregation often from Illinois during our virtual pandemic worship. We will plant a symbolic trinity of trees on our church grounds. We will have rested and renewed ourselves deeply and be ready to delve into our ancestral and familial roots, both personally and through our holy scriptures. We will embody the phrase “there are two things we must give our children—one is roots and the other is wings.”

A-7 Communicating Insights: Upon Angie’s return to the church there will be opportunities for reconnection through a reception, meeting with people one on one, and small group conversations. There will be a sermon series on the genealogy of the families in Genesis, and an educational series where people will map their own family histories and diagrams to look for insights from their family trees. We will also look at ways of blessing our sacred space so that it is a place where people feel rooted in God’s love. This period of rest will shape our conversations about our next five-year plan.

A-8 Congregational Process: Our congregation has voiced its enthusiastic support for Pastor Angie’s sabbatical plans. We have gathered the congregation’s thoughts through a survey and in small group discussions. We wholeheartedly support Angie’s desire to rest, renew and ground herself deeply in her ancestral and faith roots. The Deacons unanimously approved the four-month sabbatical, increasing the length by a month for more rest. At an all-church meeting,

we voted unanimously to affirm Pastor Angie’s plans for her sabbatical. The church also expressed our need as a congregation to rest, renew and prepare ourselves for our next season of shared ministry. Our hearts sing with gratitude for many blessings of our shared ministry, and we rejoice at the opportunities that lie ahead of us.

Part B – Congregational Information

B-1 Church History: Our story as a church begins on the evening of February 16, 1846, when about 25 men of Cotuit Port, most of them sea captains, met to consider the possibility of building a spacious and conveniently located Meeting House at which Baptists, Congregationalists, and Methodists might worship together. In 1879, however, there was a parting of the ways between the Congregationalists and the Methodists. Subsequently, the Methodists secured land at the site of our present church, and on April 5, 1901, the cornerstone was laid. In 1923, the Methodists and Congregationalists decided to rejoin together in worship and became a “federated church,” affiliated with both the United Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ, welcoming worshipers of all traditions. The last major building project was in 1941, when the congregation added onto the current sanctuary. Since embarking on our current expansion project, the congregation has gained a greater appreciation of our church history. We are surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses encouraging us to create a sacred space and a beloved community that will be a blessing for the generations to come.

B-2 Membership and Attendance: We have 241 members. Average worship attendance was 100 before the pandemic. We are back at that level when we combine our hybrid numbers for in-person and online attendance. **B-3 Previous Pastorates:** Angela Menke Ballou (UCC) 2011-present, Nicole M. Lamarche (UCC) 2007-2010, Elizabeth Hoblin Endicott (UCC) 1991-2006, Ronald V. Wilson (UMC) 1985-1990, and Roger S. Burkhart (UCC) 1976-1985.

B-4 Sample of Ministries: Our ministries grow from our Vision, inspiring our work to be: Grounded in Gratitude, Spiritually Alive, acting as a Beloved Community, and being Christ's Hands. The following highlights some of our ministries: As with most congregations, CFC has a very active Children's Sunday School, Confirmation Program, Vacation Bible School, Choir, and Weekly Prayer Circle. We are very passionate about addressing food insecurity and serve two lunches and one dinner for the most vulnerable in our community every month. Partnering with the Fire Department, we provide holiday meals for local families at Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. CFC lends high quality used medical equipment at no cost to our local community. Financial support and volunteer hours are given to various organizations including Cape Cod Council of Churches, Habitat for Humanity, and various substance abuse recovery organizations. We hold monthly blood drives and provide space for an NA and three AA Meetings each week. We also have chair yoga and meditation classes for the community. As you can see, our church stretches across boundaries of all types: age, gender, race, various faiths and walks of life, to bring the message of God's love and healing.

B-5 Annual Budget: Our annual operational budget is \$301,000. See attached for detail.

Part C – Pastoral Information

C-1 Pastor's Education: Pastor Angie received a B.S. in Industrial Engineering from Purdue University in 1998. Following graduation, she worked at Walt Disney World, fulfilling a childhood dream. In May 2005, she received two degrees from Iliff School of Theology, a Master of Divinity and Master of Theological Studies. The Iliff School of Theology faculty voted her *2005 Student of the Year*. In 2010, she completed a certificate program through the Sisters of St. Joseph's Spiritual Direction Internship Initiative.

C-2 Ordination: Pastor Angie was ordained on October 23, 2005 in her childhood church, Salem United Church of Christ, Huntingburg, IN by the Lincolnland Association of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ. Prior to her ordination, she served as a licensed Associate Minister at Henderson Community Church in Henderson, CO, from 2002-2005. She was the Associate Minister at Second Congregational Church UCC in Beverly, MA, from 2005-2011. She has been the solo Pastor at Cotuit Federated Church in Cotuit, MA, since October 2011. We just celebrated ten wonderful years of ministry together.

C-3 Wider Church Leadership: Pastor Angie has been an engaged leader at all levels of the church. As a youth she was a part of the Young Ambassador Faith Exchange for German and American youth, 1993/94. She was a leader for the program as a young adult, 1997/98. In the summer of 2001, she volunteered at Forth Spring Community Center in Belfast, Northern Ireland. She traveled with Christian Peacemaker Teams to Israel and Palestine in 2003. She was Moderator of the Essex Association, 2010-2011, and she served on the board for Wider Church Ministries and Common Global Ministries, 2007-2011. She traveled to Zambia and South Africa in 2010 with Wider Church Ministries. She served on the Massachusetts Conference UCC Board of Directors, 2012-2016, chairing the board from 2014-2016. She currently serves as the President and Chair of Board of Directors for the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Church leadership requires great creativity, adaptability, and intense periods of work. The last few years have been unusually challenging for all. This sabbatical will be a time of rest and renewal where energy and enthusiasm are restored enabling Pastor Angie and the CFC congregation to respond to God's call for their shared ministry. Thank you for your consideration of our grant proposal.