

# **ALGER PARK CHURCH**

## Church Profile 2025

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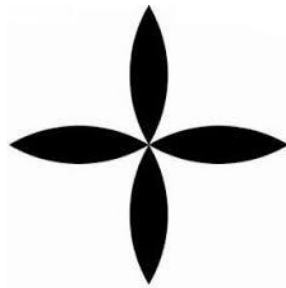
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## Part I: Church Information

❖ **Church Name:** Alger Park Christian Reformed Church

**Address:** 2655 Eastern Ave., SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507

**Telephone:** (616)-452-9686

**Website:** algerparkchurch.org

**Classis:** Grand Rapids South

❖ **Classical Church Counselor:** Jim Boer

❖ **Search Committee Chair:** Sam Smartt

**Contact:** pastorsearch@algerparkchurch.org  
(423)-240-5865

❖ **Community Setting:**

**Location:** Suburban/Metropolitan

**Function:** College/University

**Growth:** Growing

**Population:** 5,000 (Alger Heights neighborhood)  
200,000 (Grand Rapids)  
660,000 (Kent County)  
1.5 million (West Michigan)

Alger Park church is located in the vibrant neighborhood of Alger Heights in southeast Grand Rapids, which is the fastest-growing city in Michigan. The Alger Park neighborhood is a small, walkable neighborhood with several restaurants and shops. Approximately 80% of residents are homeowners, and the average age is 32.<sup>1</sup>

❖ **Paid Staff Positions:**

**Full Time:** Lead Pastor (open)  
Director of Music and Worship (open)

**Part Time:** Director of Faith Formation (open)  
Office Administrators  
Comptroller  
Hand2Hand Coordinator  
Kids Hope Directors  
Facilities Coordinator (open)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://grandrapidsneighborhoods.com/alger-heights/>

## Part II: Position Details

- ❖ **Position Available:** Lead Pastor
- ❖ **Full-time / Part-time:** Full-time
- ❖ **Date of Vacancy:** September 2023
- ❖ **We are open to:** Male and female pastors
- ❖ **Bi-vocational Position?:** No
- ❖ **Required years of ministry experience:** Open to all levels of experience
- ❖ **Required Languages:** English
- ❖ **Previous Three Persons in this position:**
  - Ecko DeVries (1987-2005)
  - David Deters (1994-2018)
  - Stephen DeWitt (2009-2023)/Sam Gutierrez (2018-2022)

- ❖ **General position description:**

Alger Park CRC is seeking a dedicated and visionary Pastor to join our community. The ideal candidate will be passionate about supporting and communicating our vision and mission, leading worship services, providing pastoral care, and fostering growth within the congregation. This individual will collaborate closely with church leadership and staff to enhance our mission and engage with our neighborhood and broader community.

### Qualifications

- Ordained minister with a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) or equivalent.
- Strong theological knowledge and pastoral experience.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- Demonstrated ability to lead and inspire a diverse congregation.
- Experience in staff leadership.
- Commitment to personal spiritual growth and continuous learning.

A more detailed job description will be provided later in the application process.

## Part III: Church Profile and Membership Statistics

- ❖ **Average Sunday Attendance:** 125-150 in-person; 15-25 via livestream
- ❖ **Active Adult Professing Members:** 210
- ❖ **Membership Statistics:**

### **Age:**

- **0-11** - 7%
- **12-18** - 3%
- **19-24** - 1%
- **25-34** - 11%
- **35-49** - 10%
- **50-64** - 30%
- **65+** - 38%

### **Occupation:**

- **Business** - 15%
- **Professional** - 30%
- **Trades** - 5%
- **Stay-at-home Parent** - 5%
- **Agriculture** - 0%
- **Retired** - 40%
- **Student** - 1%
- **Nurse** - 2%
- **Other** - 3%

### **Membership Duration (includes regular attenders):**

- **< 5 years** - 20%
- **5-10 years** - 7%
- **>10 years** - 73%

### ❖ **Race/Ethnicity:**

**Composition of Congregation: Mono-cultural**

#### **Congregation**

**White / Caucasian** - 95%  
**Asian** - 1%  
**Black / African American** - 3%  
**Hispanic / Latino** - 1%

#### **Grand Rapids**

**White / Caucasian** - 63%  
**Black / African American** - 17.9%  
**Hispanic / Latino** - 15.9%  
**Asian** - 2.8%  
**Other** - 0.5%

## Part IV: Worship, Leadership, and Church Characteristics

### Worship

#### ❖ **Worship Service Details:**

Morning worship services are held on Sundays at 9:30am. There are no regularly scheduled evening services; however, we do occasionally hold services in the evening for special programs and events.

#### ❖ **Planning and Structure of the Liturgy/Worship:**

Worship at Alger Park is characterized by meaningful liturgy that is casual and personal. We value a variety of music, both ancient and modern. We use music and liturgy to create an integrated theme in each service.

Instrumentation is also blended, from organ to piano to violin, bass, and electric and acoustic guitar. We offer the music and liturgy both in a paper bulletin and on the projection screen for each service. Weekly communion and baptism remembrance are part of our worship.

We are blessed with many gifted members of the congregation who assist with planning worship and liturgy, and who play instruments or sing as part of worship teams. The live streaming and audio mixing are also managed by volunteers from the congregation. Until recently this work was spearheaded by our Director of Worship, a role we are in the process of filling again.

### Leadership

#### ❖ **Council: Members: 18**

**Term Length:** 3 years

**Meetings:** 4-6 times per year

#### ❖ **Council Subgroups:**

**Vision/Support Council (8 people):** meets once a month and deals with strategic direction/vision and the financial aspects of Alger Park Church. This includes determining programs, staff, and the budget.

**Care Council (10 people):** meets once a month and handles the needs of the members of our congregation (health needs, benevolence, shut-ins, transportation, meals). They intentionally visit and/or call members and walk along-side them during life circumstances.

## ❖ Discipleship

Our discipleship practices range from studies with curriculum to interest-based groups. These practices include: book studies, small groups, Sunday School, Little Lambs, and Quest, Men's and Women's Bible Studies, The Refugee Resettlement Team, Kids Hope, and Catechism.

## Church Characteristics

### ❖ Presently, the focus of our church's ministry is:

- ☐ Community exclusively
- ☐ Community primarily
- ☒ Community & current members/participants equally
- ☐ Current members/participants primarily
- ☐ Current members/participants exclusively

### ❖ In our church, the worship service is designed for:

- ☐ Designed for unchurched
- ☐ Emphasis on unchurched
- ☐ Unchurched and believers
- ☐ Emphasis on believers
- ☒ Designed for believers

### ❖ In our church, the style of music used in the worship service is:

- ☐ Contemporary
- ☐ Mostly Contemporary
- ☒ Blended
- ☐ Mostly Traditional
- ☐ Traditional

### ❖ In our church, leadership is generally provided by:

- ☐ Predominantly lay leaders
- ☐ Frequently lay leaders
- ☒ Lay leaders & pastoral staff share leadership
- ☐ Lay leaders function under pastoral staff
- ☐ Predominantly pastoral staff

### ❖ Our church seeks to encourage spiritual growth through:

- ☐ No specific ministries
- ☒ Ministries for a few groups
- ☐ Ministries for selected groups
- ☐ Ministries for most groups
- ☐ Ministries for all groups

❖ **In our church, evangelism strategies and methods are:**

- ☐ Predominantly unplanned
- ☒ Generally unplanned
- ☐ Equal emphasis
- ☐ Generally planned
- ☐ Predominantly planned

❖ **Our church is representative of the economic diversity of our community:**

- ☐ Strongly representative
- ☐ Mostly representative
- ☒ Moderately representative
- ☐ Mildly representative
- ☐ Weakly representative

❖ **Our church is representative of the ethnic diversity of our community:**

- ☐ Strongly representative
- ☐ Mostly representative
- ☐ Moderately representative
- ☒ Mildly representative
- ☐ Weakly representative

❖ **Our church's response to compassion, mercy, and justice needs is:**

- ☐ Commitment to church-based action
- ☒ Encouragement of church-based action
- ☐ Church-based and personal action
- ☐ Encouragement of personal action
- ☐ Commitment to personal action

❖ **Our church's missional focus is:**

- ☐ All local
- ☒ Mostly local
- ☐ Equally local and global
- ☐ Mostly global
- ☐ All global



## Part V: Building, Financials, and Compensation

- ❖ Present annual budget: \$600,000
- ❖ Last year's annual budget: \$927,000
- ❖ % of financial obligations met for previous complete year:
  - Budget: 100%
  - Denominational Ministry Shares: 73.33%
  - Classical Ministry Shares: 100%
- ❖ Amount contributed above budget and ministry shares: \$120,000
- ❖ Facilities:
  - Description: Built in the 1960s, with major additions since, our facilities are well maintained and sufficient for our ministries. The church has considered renovations to improve layout and accommodate growth. Renovation plans were discussed as recently as 2022, though changes within the congregation and pastoral staff have rendered this a less urgent priority.
  - Are your buildings adequate for your ministries? ☒ Yes ☐ No
  - Is a building program projected?: ☐ Yes ☒ No
  - Does the church own a parsonage? ☐ Yes ☒ No
  - Location of office or study: On site.
- ❖ Salary range based on CRC Minister Compensation Survey: ☒ Yes ☐ No
- ❖ Average annual increase over the past three years: 4%.
- ❖ Housing: ☒ Housing allowance: Included in salary  
☐ Parsonage only:  
☐ Either of the above:
- ❖ Benefits and expenses:
  - **Pension:** Yes, through the denomination.
  - **Medical insurance:** Full premiums paid by the church.
  - **HSA Contribution:** \$3,600/year
  - **Life insurance:** \$175,000 of Basic Life Insurance through the denomination.
  - **Continuing education fund:** Funds are available through the Endowment Funds at Alger Park. Requests for approval go through Vision Council.
  - **Continuing education time:** 2 weeks/year of paid study time
  - **Mileage Allowance:** ☒ Yes ☐ No
  - **Sabbatical available:** ☒ Yes ☐ No (three months after six years of service; then every five years thereafter)
  - **Annual vacation time:** four weeks in addition to study time.
  - **Christian School allowance:** Available based on need.

## Part VI: Narrative and Church History

### ❖ Alger Park CRC Mission and Vision

#### Our Mission:

Alger Park Church joins the Holy Spirit in God's radical movement by creatively growing in and living out the gospel of Jesus where we live, learn, work, and worship.

Together we engage in worship, acts of service, generosity, environmental stewardship, community building, mentoring, and education. We are privileged to work with God in the Alger Heights/Garfield Park neighborhoods, in all the places we live and work, and around the world.

#### Our Vision:

Do you have a recently articulated vision for ministry? ☒ Yes ☐ No

We seek to live out our calling to follow Christ in our worship, the way we engage one another in community, in our discipleship of all believers, and through servant leadership.

Alger Park's worship is an outpouring of love in response to what God has done for us. As a community of believers, our corporate worship transforms our individual lives and strengthens our life together.

In the gospels, Jesus says that the greatest commandment is to love God above all and your neighbor as yourself. Alger Park strives to follow this command in our community, both by deepening relationships inside our church and within the Alger Heights neighborhood.

Alger Park Church is a faith community that equips its body for discipleship in Christ. Made up of people at all ages and all different points along their spiritual journeys, we are a spiritual home where all are encouraged and enabled to take the next step along their path to becoming what God has envisioned for them.

Submission is not indicative of weakness or inaction, but of the ultimate form of action: trusting in someone and something other than, bigger than ourselves. Alger Park Church seeks to carry out servant leadership following the example of Christ in the way we organize and collaborate on the work of the church—with our pastors, staff, council, and congregation being accountable to one another.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This is an edited excerpt from our 2025 Vision Statement. The entire document is available upon request.

#### ❖ Our Strengths and Passions:

Alger Park is a welcoming community where guests are quickly greeted. We care deeply for one another and we do our best to meet each other's needs. We value strong preaching and active participation in worship. Many of our ministries are vibrant, and promoting community is a point of emphasis.

We are passionate about worship, local and global missions, and caring for one another. Increasingly, we desire deeper relationships with our neighborhood and greater involvement in justice issues.

#### ❖ Challenges In Our Church:

We have dealt with tremendous upheaval in the congregation in recent years. Like many, COVID resulted in a shift away from in-person worshipers, from which we have not fully rebounded. The impact, however, of the CRCNA's Human Sexuality Report (HSR) has been even more profound.

In the fall of 2023, after two years of faithful study and discernment, as well as extensive listening sessions, the Alger Park congregation took a vote regarding our stance on human sexuality. The motion from Council proposed that those in a committed, same-sex relationship be eligible to serve as office-bearers. Since this also required a change to the by-laws of the church, it required a  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority for approval. The vote fell short by a slim margin, with over 60% voting in favor.

In the aftermath of the vote, roughly 30% of the congregation left Alger Park, including approximately half of council members. These departures consisted disproportionately of younger families with school-age children. Additionally, all five of our major staff have departed within the last two years—one before the vote took place, three in the wake of the vote, and one for unrelated reasons more recently.

#### ❖ Hope, and Goals for the Future:

Although the past few years have been challenging, we are hopeful for a bright future for Alger Park Church. Members have stepped up in leadership roles, we have greater audiovisual capacity for homebound members to participate remotely, and new members are joining. In particular, we are excited about growth in young couples just beginning families—by spring 2025 we will have more children 3 and under in nursery than we do in K-12.

Also, while varying views on the HSR remain, there is greater unity of vision than in the past. There is also a sense that ministries and congregational care, which have long been the life-blood of the church but which had been neglected due to our focus on sexuality issues, are once again taking center stage and revitalizing our leadership. Grief lingers, but excitement abounds as we move forward together with faith, hope, and love to discover how we will write the next chapter of our story together.

Though we desire a balance between staff-leadership and lay-leadership, we hope to fill the following positions in the near future:

- Lead Pastor
- Worship Director
- Faith Formation - Children
- Faith Formation - Adults
- Facilities Coordinator
- Congregational Care

As we fill these positions, we hope to be able to offer more robust children's ministries and develop new discipleship opportunities for adults as well.

❖ **Ecumenical participation:**

We are an active part of Grand Rapids Classis South. In the past we have partnered with other neighborhood churches and are open to partnering again. We financially support non-profit neighborhood agencies and ministries. Attending believers are welcome to participate in our weekly communion services.

❖ **Describe what being Christians of Reformed accent means to you:**

We value the priesthood of all believers and equipping our members to see the whole of their lives as being lived before the face of God, seeing everything they do as part of their ministry.

At our core, we are—collectively and individually—a living paradox: while we are more broken and helpless than we could ever imagine, we are more loved and accepted by Jesus than we could ever hope.

A picture of our community would show us, broken and hopeful, gathered at the feet of Jesus. We follow the word of God as expressed in the Bible, and our worship and work are animated by the Holy Spirit. We are and seek to be deeply connected to one another through our service, which flows from the love that Christ has shown us.

❖ **Describe your understanding of the relationship between the local church and the Christian Reformed denomination:**

Local churches make a covenant commitment together to provide resources and support to seek the kingdom of God around the world in ways that the local churches cannot do on their own. We commit to shared doctrines and ministries, but each local church gives unique expression to that shared faith and commitment to seeking the kingdom of God.

As part of the Christian Reformed Church of North America, we respect, appreciate, and are committed to our denomination, while maintaining our respect and love of those with diverse experiences and perspectives. We treasure the unity we have in Christ and pursue the healing of division and fracture in our world, in our church, and in our own lives.

❖ **Identify some of the cultural challenges facing Christians and Christian churches today:**

Cultural challenges abound and are both various and multifaceted: decreasing church attendance and participation, the increased prevalence of online worship and technology in general (AI, social media), positions on human sexuality, effective ministry to and with single adults, climate change, science skepticism, racism and anti-racism efforts, Christian nationalism, immigration and care for the disenfranchised, corporate and personal greed, the place of Christian education in society, the appropriate degree and orientation of political involvement for Christians, and perhaps most of all the church's struggle to seem a relevant and authoritative voice on these issues amidst the noise.

One common theme that unifies many of these issues is our need to strike a balance between standing strong in our convictions and allowing space for different kinds of people and perspectives in the church. In short, how can the church be both bold and welcoming?

Scripture exhorts us both to holiness (1 Peter 1:15) and to inclusivity (Galatians 3:28). We are to take seriously our obligation to teach God's truths as revealed in scripture (Matthew 18:6), but also to be open to the movement of the Spirit in unexpected ways (Acts 10:44-46). We desire to welcome everyone to the church, yet speaking boldly on the issues of the day—whether they be theological or sociopolitical—will always push some (perhaps many) people away. (John 6:66)

This is not a partisan problem or a culture-war issue; the church offers a challenge to all of us at some point, even in the midst of welcome. Perhaps a longtime member is irritated by a corporate prayer addressing climate change, or a visitor is put off by a sermon endorsing the orthodox view of sexuality. While we should seek to be winsome in dealing with sensitive topics, we must not shy away from them. For if our desire to welcome comes from a fear of offense rather than a scriptural understanding of love-in-action, members will not be challenged, and we'll have a church that doesn't bear the hallmark of the movement of the Spirit: transformation.

❖ **A Snapshot of Important Events in Our Church's History:**

Starting with a group of charter members of 62 families who lived in Alger Heights, Alger Park CRC was born in the early 1950's as an offshoot of Burton Heights and Seymour Christian Reformed Churches. Enduring a Christmas fire in the 1960's, Alger Park's ministries continued.

Part of the beginnings of Alger Park were creating Women's Guilds, young adult's groups, VBS, two morning services and an evening service, the Young Calvinist Convention, GEMS and Cadets, Women's and Men's Bible Studies, and Toppers for the mature members. These opportunities for spiritual growth helped develop a strong community. Because we are located in Alger Heights, our congregation has had a core of members from the neighborhood over the years.

Our congregation has been blessed with pastors who have stayed for lengthy periods of time. The pandemic strengthened our online presence but challenged our in-person worship attendance. Weekly communion and remembering our baptism began as a way of focusing on our unity in Christ during this challenging time.

Since Alger Park's vote regarding our position on human sexuality and the subsequent loss of many members, we have been reimagining what God's calling is for us as a congregation. We continue to welcome new members including young families, and we continue to reach out to our community through Kids Hope and Hand2Hand.

Just as Alger Park began with a core group of believers dedicated to God and building a place of community, Christian fellowship, and faith formation, our prayer is that we continue, Lord willing, to be a light in Alger Heights.

## Alger Park Church - Lead Pastor Search Committee - 2025

### Brad Busscher

My spouse, Michelle, and I have 5 children and an “adopted” daughter. Michelle and I both grew up in West Michigan, and we have been married for 31 years. Since 1996, I have worked for Gentex in Zeeland as an engineering manager. I enjoy water skiing, golfing, and watching NFL games and occasionally attending a game! Go Lions!

Michelle and I have been members of Alger Park Church since 1996 and are both Elders, serving on the Vision and Care Councils. I have also helped lead the youth group at Alger for many years.



Michelle and I grew up in the CRC and the local Christian schools. I look forward to worshiping each week and being part of the community of Alger. The worship is meaningful with singing, liturgy and sacraments, all playing key pieces in my spiritual life development.

If you need an elder, just call me.

### Nancy Ludema



My husband, Mike, has attended Alger Park all his life and I became a member when we married 37 years ago. We have three grown children and three grandchildren.

I retired last April from a career in cardiovascular nursing. While I loved my nursing career, I am really enjoying retirement as I now have more time to help with my grandkids and to volunteer at church.

I enjoy reading, biking, learning pickle ball and cross-country skiing. I also enjoy both college and NFL football.

I grew up in the Reformed church and accepted Christ as my Savior as a young child. I can't remember a time when I didn't love Jesus and though I questioned my faith in high school I always felt God holding me. I love corporate worship, helping lead women's Bible study and learning at Jesus feet in my daily quiet time.

If you need a band aid, just call me.

### **Sam Smartt**

My wife, Amanda, and I are southern transplants; I grew up in Chattanooga, TN, and she grew up in a small farming community in southwestern VA. We both attended Wake Forest University, where I earned my MFA in Documentary Filmmaking. We moved to Grand Rapids in 2013 when I was offered a position as a professor of Film and Media at Calvin University.

We have three boys: Sam (10), Baxter (7), and John (2). As a family, we spend a lot of time playing and/or watching games and sports of all kinds.



We have been members of Alger Park since 2022, and Amanda currently serves on the Care Council. I grew up in the Presbyterian church, and Amanda grew up in the Lutheran church. We have recently experienced a growing interest in the classical spiritual disciplines as a means of grace in our lives. We are excited for this next phase in the life of Alger Park Church.

If you have an idea for a documentary, just call me.

### **Wanda Vande Kopple**



I have been a member of Alger Park Church since 1982 and have been involved in many of its ministries, particularly with its children and women. I am not a Michigan native but was born in Northwest Iowa. Already at an early age, the Holy Spirit instilled in me the desire to become an educator and led me to teach in four Christian schools.

My deceased husband, Bill, was also an educator and now two of our three sons are serving in education. I am "Oma" to five grandchildren.

At the present time, I am serving on two committees for Grand Rapids Classis South: the Prayer Committee and the Spiritual Growth and Prayer Committee. When I am not involved with church activities, I enjoy jigsaw puzzles, reading, attending local sporting events, dramas and concerts, and learning through CALL classes at Calvin University.

If you need the minutes to our meetings, just call me.



### **Luke White**

I have been gratefully attending Alger Park Church for the past 3.5 years. I live in the Alger Heights neighborhood with my wife, Brianna, and we have just become new parents this January, 2025. In my free time, you'll find me enjoying Third Wave Coffee, playing pick-up basketball, or experimenting with pizzas in my Ooni Pizza Oven.

During the week, I put on my strategy consultant hat at Deloitte, helping tech companies navigate their next strategic steps. Brianna and I co-lead the Hospitality Committee and are passionate about fostering a welcoming church environment where attendees can connect with Jesus and with others.



Brianna and I feel grateful to have found a church where people openly love Jesus, share their faith and love God's word. We knew right away Alger Park Church could be our spiritual home.

If you need a host for a pie throw-down, just call me.

### **Jeff Sajdak**



I am a Wisconsin native who served as a pastor for 20 years in three CRC congregations in Iowa and Michigan. My wife, Karin, and I have been happily married for 40 years and have four children and four grandchildren, plus a dog and a cat.

We joined Alger Park CRC in 2024. I delight in my family, riding my e-bike to work as often as I can, playing pickleball, golfing, or participating in a rousing board game. I cheer enthusiastically for my beloved Milwaukee Brewers and Green Bay Packers.

Currently I am the Dean of Students and the Co-Director of the Doctor of Ministry program at Calvin Theological Seminary. I have an interest in spiritual formation, particularly for pastors, missionaries, and other church leaders.

If you have a deep theological question, just call me.

## **Sue VanTimmeren**

I have attended Alger Park Church for around 30 years. What a gift it has been to be part of a caring community that loves God deeply and wants to serve him well. I am a third grade teacher at Grand Rapids Christian Elementary School. I have enjoyed teaching Kindergarteners through fourth graders.

I come from a family of five kids, so spending time with my siblings and nieces and nephews is always a loud, exciting time. I love to hike, travel, read, be outdoors, head to the beach, and hang out with friends. My claim to fame is that I have been to all seven continents, so yes, I do like to travel!

Here at church, I am part of the Sunday school teaching team. Over the years at Alger I have been involved in Bible studies, VBS, small groups, and serving as a deacon.

If you need travel advice, just call me.



**We look forward to hearing from you!**