FOR LOCAL CHURCHES SEEKING LEADERSHIP FOR A DESIGNATED TERM POSITION

The covenantal relationship between a church and those called by that church to serve as pastors and teachers and in other ministerial positions is strengthened when vital information is openly shared by covenantal partners. To that end, we attest that, to the best of our abilities, we have provided information in this document that accurately represents our church. We have not knowingly withheld any information that would be helpful to candidates. As the committee charged with the responsibility for identifying and recommending a suitable leader for the interim time for our church, we have been authorized to share the information herein with potential candidates.

We understand that a candidate may wish to secure further knowledge, information, and opinions about our church. We encourage a candidate to do so, recognizing that an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing and healthy relationships between calling bodies and persons seeking a ministry position.

______________________________________________________________
Signature of Search Committee Chairperson                                      Date

__________________________
Chairperson's Name

Church Name: First Congregational Church of Reading, U.C.C.
Address: 25 Woburn St., Reading, MA, 01867
Telephone: (781) 944-0205 (office)
Fax: NA
Email: office1@churchofreading.comcastbiz.net
Website: http://ChurchOfReading.org
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/churchofreading/
Date of vacancy: 1 December 2018
Contact Person and information: Rev. Wendy Vander Hart, Assoc. Conf. Minister vanderhartw@macucc.org phone: 781-36901396
Ministry flows from mission.
A time of transition in the life of a congregation is an opportunity to gain clarity on the church’s mission. The MA Conference is living into this mission “Rooted in the grace of God, the mission of the Massachusetts Conference United Church of Christ is to nurture local church vitality and the covenant among our churches to make God’s love and justice real.”

What is your local church’s mission? (Please share your church’s mission statement here or name that one needs to be developed):

We offer three statements we’ve developed in recent years to help us clarify our mission. We continue to engage in ongoing conversations regarding a mission statement. We have hopes that an interim might assist us in refining our mission statement.

Our Welcome
Believing that Christ’s call — “Come unto me” — is unconditional, we welcome and embrace all people — people of all races, ethnicities and ages, mental, emotional and physical abilities, gender identities and sexual orientations, income and social standings, and family and religious traditions.

Celebrating the full diversity of God’s creation, we invite all to join us in our worship and to participate in the full life and ministry of this faith community. (ONA statement: 5/19/2002)

Vision Statement
As gardeners of the Spirit, we provide fertile soil to nurture both church and community, harvesting faith, compassion and understanding of God’s love, as taught by, Jesus Christ. (Annual Report 2009-2010)

Statement of Purpose
We gather as a faith community to love and magnify God. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we will love our neighbors as ourselves, advocating for peace and justice. We will go out and share our faith in Christ, inviting others to join us. We will be nurturers of the Spirit and teachers of the Word. We will welcome and provide sanctuary to all. (from 1/27/2002)

The most typical situations in which a church would seek a designated term pastor are:
1. A church in process of major restructure, assessment of viability, physical re-location, uniting or yoking with another congregation.
2. A church coping with the aftermath of major conflict or trauma.
3. A church whose continuing viability is doubtful.
4. A church where the regular search & call process may have proved difficult due to size, geographical location, or other issues.
5. A church in process of staff reconfiguration, where a particular ministry will be staffed to maintain needed programming while the reconfiguration of responsibilities is designed and accomplished.

Our church is choosing to engage a designated term pastor at this time because we understand the work before us to be in the category of number __3__ (choose the situation from the five above that best describes the work that is before the church in the present moment and describe why.)
Designated Term Ministry Pastor Goals:

“With specificity and clarity, please describe what you hope to accomplish during the Designated Term Ministry Time:”

We seek pastoral leadership that will help us better articulate our congregational desires in various aspects of our faith journey. We view spiritual guidance as being of prime importance, with an appropriate balance between pastoral versus lay leadership in these endeavors. We provide the following as examples of where we seek guidance:

- Developing a consensus regarding styles and emphasis relating to worship
  - music
  - sermons
  - prayer and meditation
  - involvement of children and youth
- Helpful direction in faith journeys of our congregants
  - understanding scripture more fully
  - options for intergenerational educational activities
  - understand better our faith and faith practices, e.g. through book discussions
  - incorporating prayer/meditation into daily living
  - spiritual practices to incorporate into sacred moments throughout each day
- Guiding and supporting our involvement in the greater community
  - Reading Clergy Association
  - housing the arts
  - community dinners
  - Reading Embraces Diversity
    - support for LGBTQ
    - support for victims of hate graffiti [a local problem the past year and a half]
  - Town 375th anniversary (2019)/FCCR 250th (2020) anniversary

We also seek pastoral leadership that will help guide our congregation’s continuing exploration of the various options we have identified which would allow us to continue our presence as a viable and sustainable church community. These options include:

- Combining with another congregation, thereby increasing available resources to support our ministries.
- Wider use of our building and infrastructure through increased rentals, which would also increase available resources to support our ministries.
- Physically dividing a portion of our building and infrastructure and selling part of the divided building to other groups.
- Continuing our current church community in a different, more affordable location.
- Increase membership across all ages and all demographic groups. This would also allow us to be more faithful to our Open and Affirming statement.

We seek pastoral leadership that would help guide us to an appropriate choice among those options, or perhaps, help us find a better option we have yet to imagine. Finding the proper pathway forward will allow us to stop worrying about our financial status, and instead, will lead us to develop a shared sense of affirmation and joy in our current and future endeavors.
“Please describe how you will know if these goals have been accomplished.”

We will know we have been successful if we have a coherent plan in place that will allow us to continue as a viable congregation and vibrant church community that is able to maintain financial sustainability into the foreseeable future, and also one that has developed a sense of shared joy in our current and future activities that is free from significant spiritual and financial uncertainty.

Intro to our church:
In a paragraph or two for each item, please provide the following:

Brief History:

The First Congregational Church of Reading (FCCR) was formed in 1770, just under 250 years ago. Not long after the denominational merger that formed the United Church of Christ, FCCR became a member of the new denomination. During its first two centuries, the church thrived. The total membership was more than a thousand congregants throughout the 1970s.

Since that time, the demographics of Reading's population — most new families moving into town do not come from a Protestant background — and societal changes, which began with the cultural upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, the congregation has been slowly dwindling for the past half century. The church membership stood around 500 in 2000, and has since continued to dwindle to about 200 members today. Average weekly attendance is about a third that number.

Between 2000 and 2002, FCCR went through a very careful and detailed process of exploring issues around its becoming an Open and Affirming church. In May, 2002, at the end of all that discussion and study, a resolution to become an Open and Affirming congregation was passed, with more than 80% of those voting in favor of the resolution.

First Congregational Church of Reading has always been an active participant in the life of the Town of Reading. At its inception in 1770, Massachusetts was essentially a theocracy, and the church was a guiding voice in all aspects of town life. In more recent times, FCCR has remained involved, often in association with other churches in town under the auspices of the Reading Clergy Association, an ecumenical association of the six or seven active congregations in town.

Church Strengths:

One of the key strengths of FCCR is that we are mission and community oriented. The Mission Ministry provides opportunities for the church’s parishioners to respond to monetary appeals, to help with collections of material goods and participate in hands-on projects. Examples include providing dinner for Emmaus House family shelter, preparing and serving lunch to the homeless of Common Cathedral, white sock collection for the Outdoor Church and Ecclesia Ministries, gift collection for City Mission Society, toiletries collection or pillow and bedding drive for Emmaus House, food collection for Reading Food Pantry, emergency clean-up buckets for Church World Service, and collection of funds for One Great Hour of Sharing. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service in Reading, originally started by FCCR, is a coming together of people across the Reading community to work on a common task. We are caring and hardworking as evidenced by the Olde Redding Faire which requires hours and hours of work of FCCR members to make this happen and some proceeds go to various charitable causes. Other opportunities for caring and working together is the annual Heifer Marketplace and Cocoa and Cookies where FCCR opens their doors to the community after the town
annual holiday tree lighting. FCCR offers events to the community that center around food such as meals hosted by church members to raise money for those affected by natural disasters or to contribute to food pantries. Transgender 101 was offered to the community by our seminarian.

Another strength of FCCR is our music. We have a chancel choir and intergenerational orchestra directed by the Minister of Music, a bell choir with Handbell Director, and a Lead Instrumentalist and Organist who provides accompaniment to the chancel choir for practice and worship, for hymns and opening and closing music and works with the bell choir and orchestra. There are many opportunities for individuals to use their musical talents as part of ensembles or soloists. Our music program is one of the touch points of worship. A further strength is that we are a small congregation where everyone typically knows everyone else. We are open and affirming and welcome all.

Significant Events in the church’s history/life:

Our congregation voted to become ONA in 2002. We recently celebrated the 100th anniversary of our current building (2010). We have provided continued support to our across-the-street neighbors after a devastating condo fire in June, 2017. Our 62nd Old Redding Faire took place this past September. For several years, we have hosted a MLK, Jr. Day of Service with participation from many within our community. Each year we host a Heifer Marketplace, including booths run by various groups within the church. In 2017 a WATCHA (We Are The CHurch in Action) group was formed to provide a forum for conversation and information in dealing with social justice issues.

Our Challenges:

In February and March 2018, we held Friday Night Dinners to be in community, and to talk about what we wanted the church to be for us and our community. At the April dinner, we had charts outlining components of all parts of our church life to which each of us was to check 4 of the listed items as most important to them. Based on those results, at the May luncheon, we presented 3 budget models for voting:

1. Same as current – full time pastor, music, staff and draw approximately 14% from endowment.
2. ¾ time pastor, reduce staff, retain music, and draw approximately 10% from endowment.
3. ½ time pastor, reduced staff, no music, and draw approximately 7% from endowment.

The congregation voted 37 for option #1, 17 for option #2 and 10 for option #3. There are questions about the long term sustainability of each of these options. We need someone who can help us define what we want our church to be for us and in our community. We need to find ways to explore how we can sustain our church community in light of declining numbers.

Is there unresolved Conflict in Church? _____ Yes  _x__ No

Level of Conflict in Your Church (Low 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 High): ______ 1.5

(As identified by Speed Leas, in a Leadership Magazine article in 1989:

1. “We have problems to solve, but we can do it!”
2. “We’re not communicating. There seems to be a low level of trust…but we are talking!”
3. The focus has changed to “winners/losers!” Emotions are escalating. Some folks are leaving. At this level it is wise to seek outside help!
4. The goal is “divorce,” and getting people to quit. There are active attempts to manipulate or sabotage processes. Open communication is not being practiced.
5. Not only wanting others to leave, but seeking to hurt others in revenge!
Was the previous leader a contributor to the conflict?  _____ Yes __x__ No  
If yes, please explain: __________________________________________________________

What has the congregation and leadership learned about its role in the creation and resolution of the conflict?

**BASIC STATISTICS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#Church Members</th>
<th>Average Worship Attendance</th>
<th>CE Participation</th>
<th>Adult Ed Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>204 as of 5/2017</td>
<td>60 during program year</td>
<td>6–15</td>
<td>28 in various periodic groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017 Income</th>
<th>2017 Budget</th>
<th>2017 UCC Mission Giving</th>
<th>Reserves &amp; Endowments</th>
<th>Compensation being offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$142,484</td>
<td>$382,397</td>
<td>$19,343</td>
<td>$1,189,589</td>
<td>See below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As of 6/30/2018

We seek to be within conference guidelines for a church of our current size. The extra items below, such as insurance and vacation, are subject to negotiation, but also within conference guidelines.

Cash Salary offered $ __________ $40,000 – $50,000 __________

Conference Compensation Guidelines (salary range): $ ____ $42,333 – $52,480 __________

Housing

__x__ Housing allowance only $ ____ $25,000 – $30,000 ___

___ Parsonage only

___ would offer either

x____ Pension Contribution (14% of Base Salary plus housing)

__x__ Social Security Allowance

__n__ Health Insurance ____ Individual ____ Family

__n__ Dental Insurance ____ Individual ____ Family

__n__ Vacation (1 week per quarter for full time)

__n__ Meetings

__n__ Business Mileage Reimbursed (IRS Rate)

One time Criminal Background Check fee of $140 reimbursed to the Designated Term Pastor.

Covenant/Contract will be for: _____ 24 months, ____x__ 36 months, or other __________

Is this full time or part time?  Full time

The Designated Term Pastor will be selected by: ______ Search committee/transition team ______

+ + +

Once a Designated Term Ministry Pastor has been chosen and a covenant has been signed, please forward the following documents to the Winchester Office –
Copies of the Designated Term Ministry Pastor Covenant/Contract
Documents outlining the conditions for terminating the covenant/contract.

It is customary that the church or Designated Term Ministry Pastor may terminate the contract only after 60 days notice of such intent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associate Conference Minister:</th>
<th>Rev. Wendy Vander Hart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>781-369-1396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vanderhartw@macucc.org">vanderhartw@macucc.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suggested Supplemental Materials to send to a candidate:
1. Newsletter
2. Worship bulletin
3. Annual Report

**Position Listing for the National UCC Employment Opportunities:**
(In 2000 characters or less, please describe your church and your goals for the Designated Term Ministry. This will be posted on our National UCC website for up to one month.)

The First Congregational Church of Reading, U.C.C., seeks a designated-term pastor to guide us into a joyful and sustainable future.

We are an historic New England Congregational church, situated in Reading, MA, just 10 miles north of Boston, bordered on our west and south by two major superhighways. We are looking forward to celebrating our 250th anniversary in 2020.

We joined the UCC shortly after its inception and have long been an active participant in Mass Conference of the UCC. We have also been an active presence in our local community, in various endeavors of our own and also in collaboration with the Reading Clergy Association. We became an Open and Affirming congregation in 2002. Like most churches these days, our congregational participation and financial resources have begun to dwindle.

We have two primary goals for a designated-term pastorate:

1. Maintain a healthy worship program, including supporting and guiding the faith journeys of our congregants and keeping us involved outside our local congregation. This latter goal includes maintaining involvement in our local community and as well as in mission projects, both helping to spread the love of Jesus to the greater world.
2. Guide our continuing exploration of options for continuing a financially-stable presence as a vibrant church community well into the future, and, of course, help us choose the option most likely to succeed. While we have identified several options that might increase revenue, e.g. by greatly increasing the number of outside groups renting space in our current building, the most likely options involve either scaling back staff or merging with another local congregation.

We will know the designated-term ministry goals have been met successfully when we have a coherent plan that will allow us to be a viable church community with a shared sense of joy in our work together and one that is financially sustainable well into the future.
Additional Information

FCCR has accomplished much in our ministry over these past 9 years. We would name a variety of efforts and projects as particular highlights:

- **Visioning and Strategic Planning** — FCCR has been actively engaged in visioning and strategic planning for many years; reaching back to Goal-den Days with our last pastor, to NOW (Nurture, Outreach & Witness) in 2009–10, continuing with Visioning retreats in 2010–2012. In 2013, a Flourish group formed to study the needs of our church going forward. This group evolved in 2015 into Vision 2020, with 4 major areas of investment and activities: 1) Policies & Procedures, 2) Building Use & Refreshment 3) Membership and Hospitality to newcomers, 4) Financial Stability.

- **Worship Innovation** — At FCCR we seek to be continually renewing the spirit of worship, while maintaining a balance between tradition & innovation. In that effort, we 1) added a screen and PowerPoint to our services beginning in 2013, 2) removed half of our pews and replaced them with chairs for a more intimate and flexible space, 3) explore various alternative worship styles with “DIY” in which anyone can help lead the liturgy, with “RILAS” (Radically Intergenerational Learning Activities Service) which replaces the sermon with activities and reflection for all ages, “Healing Services”, art in the sanctuary and many others.

- **Re-vamped our Organizational Structure and By-Laws** — after several years of experimentation, we moved to replace our council and committee structure with ministry teams. We then revised the by-laws to reflect our new more flexible missional model.

- **Building** — In 2009–2010 we undertook a building envelope study and followed up on some findings by repointing 3 sides of the sanctuary building. This was a significant financial investment. We struggle to keep up with on-going maintenance needs, some large and some small. Some work was done during the Flourish project to assess ‘staying or selling options.’ The clear conclusion of the congregation at that time was that no one was ready to give up our building. In 2016–17, we did a “Mini-Master Building Study and Plan” with a consultant. This led us to a new perspective on the need we have for a clear vision and mission. Over the past year, we have made important efforts to increase rentals in the building with some success.

To get to know us better as we are today, we encourage people to visit our Facebook page at First Congregational Church of Reading UCC.

We seek a designated-term pastor who will help us celebrate our accomplishments and continue our hard work. We hope to keep thinking outside of the box, and continue to be imaginative and creative. We hope to have open discussions that help us develop a deeper understanding of where we are and how we came to be here … in terms of attitudes, participation, and communication within our church; and who God is calling us to be as we move into the future.