



9 Cleaveland Street, Brunswick ME

<http://www.firstparish.net/>

1. Describe your community. What makes this community special to you? What distinguishes it from surrounding communities?

We are blessed to live in a community that is amidst the natural beauty of MidCoast Maine, the diversity of cultural events and a strong school district. There are also a wide variety of volunteer opportunities combined with the variety of skill sets people offer, the excellent local healthcare facilities and retirement communities contribute to the attraction of the region. We are also fortunate to be a neighbor of Bowdoin College which contributes to the life of Brunswick including their many cultural events and open classroom policy. Their faculty and staff make many and varied contributions to a number of local organizations including First Parish Church.

After the close of Naval Air Station Brunswick in 2011, the community took a significant hit in terms of population and tax base. In the ensuing years, the federal and state governments have spent a great deal of resources reutilizing the base. Today, the base supports a host of various businesses, educational facilities and recreational options. It still maintains an active airfield, Brunswick Executive Airport, as well.

2. Describe your congregation. Briefly describe the building(s). What is characteristic about the members of the congregation? What do you value most about this faith community? What are your congregation's greatest challenges?

As our welcome message states, we are a community of people who seek to center our lives in God, tuning our spirits to God's Spirit, so that we may empower and support one another's ministries in the world.

Among us you will find people of all generations with various religious backgrounds and some with no previous religious experience. We come from all over the country and hold differing political views. We are committed to practicing ways of sharing our stories – talking and listening to one another with open minds and open hearts – so that we may live out our commitment to be open and affirming with one another,

trusting that the love of Christ knows no bounds. Through worship, humor, music, questioning, life-long learning, and service we imagine a life of loving God, loving neighbor, and loving self.

Our challenges are not unlike most churches, especially those caring for old, historic buildings. We do have budgetary challenges to maintain the revenue to pay for our quality staff and programming, but have the competing needs of a large wooden building that is extremely expensive to maintain and heat. The concern with expenses is coupled with an aging population that is passing away and not being replaced with the same number of younger folks, or ones who give at the same level financially. We do have a vibrant children's education program which has shown some increased interest due to improved staffing. Nevertheless, Sunday school is only one of many things competing for the attention of our young people on a Sunday morning. Like many churches, we lose the battle against youth sports and other activities.

Our physical campus consists of a large, historic sanctuary built in 1845 as a unique example of Gothic Revival architecture and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1969. Diagonally across the street sits our Pilgrim House, built in 1955, which houses our staff offices, Sunday school classes, small and large meeting areas, commercial kitchen and our archives. In 2019, we added an elevator which provides access to all floors of the building. An accessible bathroom was added as well. The Church also owns an adjacent building on 185 Park Row, which is currently rented out for commercial and residential use.

3. Describe the pastoral needs of the congregation and community. What are the top gifts and/or skills you are looking for in a new pastor? What do you hope the new pastor will accomplish?

It is important to note, that we are not a Church in crisis. Our much beloved Senior Pastor is retiring, but the overall health of the Church is excellent. We have a strong, supportive and vibrant congregation led by a very competent and talented paid staff that are assisted by numerous volunteer committees. As a result, we are not looking for an Interim Pastor who will come in and "change everything". We are looking, instead for an Interim Minister who will take some time to help us process our loss and heal. Some members of Church leadership have described it as sort of a "palate cleanser" between our current pastor and the next one.

Nevertheless, that is not the only thing we are looking for in an Interim since we do not want to lose any momentum as we move forward with the work of the church and our wider vision. We would like to have the Interim assist us as we continue to implement our 5 year Strategic Plan that we adopted in late 2018. The Strategic Plan focuses on Witnessing, Welcoming and Worshipping, and early efforts have led to projects examining ways to use technology (specifically A/V) to enhance worship,

efforts to expand civil discourse and even start a community garden/outdoor space.

4. List helpful websites. E.g. Church (if you have one), town, local attractions, schools/universities, major businesses, or other points of interest websites.

<http://www.firstparish.net/>

<https://www.brunswickme.org/>

<https://brunswickdowntown.org/>

<https://mainstreetmaine.org/brunswick-me/>

<https://www.bowdoin.edu/>

5. Provide name of search committee chair and contact information. Also provide the name of the Maine Conference staff member who is assisting your search process, with their contact information.

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