

Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ Church Mini-Profile for Interim Ministry

Congregation: *First Congregational Church of Darien, UCC*

Date: *7/14/20*

1. A one-paragraph description of your **church's identity**:

First Congregational Church is a traditional family church whose members are committed to each other, their immediate community and to the wider world. Our Congregation is deeply interested in understanding the Word of God and learning how they can live a Christian life. Our Congregation consists of long-time members who have raised their children in the church and young families who have recently joined. Given the church's closeness to New York City, the Congregation includes a number of commuters. We have an active outreach program that touches the lives of hundreds of our neighbors through our volunteer work and agency support. Our membership includes people of diverse talents and perspectives who understand the power of discernment and the presence of the Holy Spirit in decision-making.

2. A one-paragraph summary of the **church's history**:

First Congregational Church of Darien has a rich history dating back to at least 1730, when area families began worshiping outside the Stamford Parish. Our church was officially organized as the Church of Christ in Middlesex in 1744 when it called its first "Settled Minister" with the ordination of Moses Mather, a young 19-year-old man who was teaching at Yale College. Well-situated on the King's Highway, the post route between New York and Boston, the meeting house was not only the first center of Christian worship for the community, it also served the spiritual needs of countless travelers. Our church has always been known for an admirable and forward-looking social conscience that has made us regional leaders, not just for decades, but for centuries – with ministers and members serving our Congregation, town, country, and our world. In the 20th century, we supported our church members in both World War I and World War II, of course; however, even 12 years before the US entered the latter conflict, we organized a Refugee Committee in 1939 to join with other churches in re-settling thousands of homeless Europeans. In the 1960s we sponsored a Darien chapter of "A Better Chance", donating the use of a house to bring six young women of color to Darien so they could attend the local high school. In the 21st century, we continue to remain the community's conscience through our example of Christian living.

3. A one-paragraph description of the **mission** and/or purpose of your church:

FCCD is a strongly accepting and welcoming community where faith in Christ's teachings makes a difference in our lives, in our homes, and in the world. We are a close spiritual family, eager to make room for new friends at worship and to get the good word out about our church and the work we do. We are a congregation that sees

the image of God in one another and follows the teachings of Jesus. We are a congregation of progressive and open faith that seeks not to convince, but to listen and discern truth through discussion, education, and prayer. We are a congregation committed to social justice that sees and responds to the needs of others and is willing to stand against the winds of popular opinion. We are a congregation of people who respect and care for one another and enthusiastically participate in the life, legacy, and work of our historic Church. All are welcome to share in our work of the present, and our hope for the future.

4. Statistical Summary:

- Active membership: **__300 (Dec 2019)**
- Total reported membership: **__535 (Dec 2019)**
- Sunday morning average attendance: **__ Sept – June Avg. 119, Summer Avg. 46, Total Year Avg. 108**
- Church School registrants: **_____ 55**
- Average Church School attendance: **_____20**
- Members serving on Boards and Committees (not including ad hoc committees or small groups): **83**
- Total budget: **\$775,000**
- Results of stewardship campaigns: last year **__\$544.3K__** two years ago **__\$569.5K__**
- Missions Giving, average over 5 years: **__(@\$110K) _10% of pledge drive plus additional fundraising programs**

5. Describe the compensation package you are offering, including dollar amounts. If less than full-time, specify the hours to be worked.

FCC Darien offers a total compensation package in excess of SNEC compensation guidelines for a candidate with deep interim experience. In addition, the church can offer either a housing allowance (subject to an agreed total compensation package cap) or its historic, well-appointed parsonage which is directly on campus.

6. Volunteer Ministries of the Church (including music, fellowship, service):

Demographic-based

Women's Association

Women's Monthly Drinks-out

Youth Group
Youth Band
Men's Group

Faith-Based

Bible study
Theology Book Group
Choir

Service-Oriented

Care Circle
Knitting Ministry
Liberation Programs Game Night
Open door shelter – Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter

Interest-based

Classics Book Club

Annual Activities (one-time events)

Homecoming picnic
Fat Sunday Feast
Blessing of the animals
Fall Fair
Advent Workshop
Ice-skating
Cross Walk
House Tour
Youth Mission Trip
Cabaret Night
Christmas Concert
Piano Concert
Dinner at Building One Community

7. Staff Positions (indicate full time vs. part time, members vs. non-members):

Senior Pastor – full-time

Minister of Youth and Pastoral Care – full-time

Director of Christian Education – part-time salaried (29 hours)

Nursery School Director – full-time

Music Director – part-time

Organist – part-time

Treasurer – part-time

Assistant Treasurer – part-time

Church Administrator – part-time

Sexton – full-time

Sunday Sexton – part-time

8. Describe the ongoing pastoral responsibilities of the interim pastor you are seeking:

Interim Minister will perform the following functions normally expected of that position. These may include, but are not limited to:

- 1. Leading Sunday worship, including administration of the sacraments;*
- 2. Counseling and/or referral in crisis situations;*
- 3. Visiting hospitalized and home-bound members as well as making other pastoral calls;*
- 4. Providing pastoral services for weddings and funerals;*
- 5. Attending or providing resources for church meetings as required or requested;*
- 6. Providing leadership for the Christian Education program (specific responsibilities may be delineated such as adult study, youth programs and Confirmation classes);*
- 7. Guiding the congregation through the transition to a settled pastor;*
- 8. Providing training for lay leaders (specific responsibilities may be delineated such as membership, outreach, stewardship, visitation);*
- 9. Providing overall administrative management of church and leadership for church staff;*
- 10. Conferring with the newly called pastor to arrange for a smooth transition;*
- 11. Participating with laity in representing the congregation in Association and Conference matters;*
- 12. Other appropriate responsibilities as may be agreed from time to time between minister and lay leadership of FCC Darien.*

9. Describe what objectives you are hoping to accomplish during the interim period:
The First Congregational Church of Darien, United Church of Christ, seeks to call a person of faith, intellect, empathy, vigor, and good humor who—with the highest professional standards, positive attitude, personal initiative, sound listening skills, and spirit of innovation—will inspire and lead our congregation in the joys and challenges of the life and work of the Christian faith in many forms of worship service. We are in search of someone who will be a dynamic and caring leader, will be a guide and mentor, skilled in empathetic conflict resolution, and engage our intellectual and invested membership. He or she will additionally help facilitate the smooth transition of both our new Nursery School Interim Director and Settled Pastor.

10. Describe how you expect your interim pastor to work with you on the five focus points of transition:

☐ HERITAGE –

First Congregational has a deep and cherished history, dating back to before the inception of the country. Our church has a strong sense of community, inclusivity, and a welcoming spirit that has always attracted people. It is common for people to say that the welcome they received upon their first visit to FCCD made them want to come back again and again. We seek a person who will understand, appreciate, and value our church's strong sense of self, inclusivity, and will welcome and encourage people wherever they are on their faith's journey.

☒ LEADERSHIP – Reviewing the church's leadership needs and its ways of organizing, in order to develop new and effective leadership

First Congregational has a compassionate and enthusiastic membership, and subsequently seeks a leader who will be dynamic, engaging, and empathetic. FCCD has strong and productive lay leaders, and a long and highly collaborative relationship between our Senior and Associate Minister, our Chair of Christian Education, our musical leaders, and our office staff. We seek an Interim who will welcome collaboration and mentorship in this leadership role. Additionally, our attached nursery school has just had a change in leadership, with a dynamic Interim Director just selected, and we are looking for someone who will help engage in a collaborative effort of transition in that arena, as well. Finally, we are seeking someone with a strong sense-of-self who will also respect and collaborate with those around them in the church community, boards, and staff.

☒ MISSION – Defining and redefining sense of purpose and direction

As First Congregational moves towards finding a settled Pastor, we are seeking someone who will jump in with both feet, eager to help motivate, inspire, and collaborate with our strong community, be a listener and mentor to members and staff, and provide intelligent, engaging, Christ-based sermons and inspiration. As a forward-thinking community, who values inclusivity, outreach, faith, and the education of our youth, we seek a passionate, caring individual who is ready to be a hands-on partner in Christ.

☒ CONNECTIONS – Discovering and strengthening the relationships a faith community builds outside of itself, with emphasis on both denominational relationships and awareness of local resources

Our church has a strong and unwavering commitment to the wider Christian church. Our conciliatory voice is present in ecumenical and interfaith gatherings and causes. As the original church in Darien – and the only church for the first century – First Congregational traditionally takes a leadership role in town-wide religious events. For example, the biggest annual town-wide event takes place on Good Friday, when the cross-walk originates at First Congregational and migrates to the local Episcopal church. Also, in recent days, First Congregational lead a community-wide peaceful march across town in support of racial justice and equality, which garnered the attendance not only of our First Selectwoman, but also over 1,000 community members, including leaders from the surrounding churches and governments.

The Interim Minister will be expected to continue and encourage this commitment to the greater community and to participate in interfaith activities. Additionally, our strong commitment to outreach is an essential element of our church life. Our congregation generously invests their time, talents, and money in a variety of outreach programs, including but not limited to local organizations assisting the homeless population of Fairfield County, addiction assistance programming, and poverty assistance. Our Interim Minister will be asked to help champion these causes that are an essential element of the fabric of our church community and mission.

Search contact person: Lou Converse
Phone – cell: 203 434 7410
E-mail: lou.converse@gmail.com

When completed, submit to the Regional Minister for review.
Rev. Dr. Michael Ciba
Senior Regional Minister
Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ
Telephone: 860-921-8204
Email: CibaM@sneucc.org