

# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

First Congregational Church of Westbrook  
Westbrook, CT

Settled Pastor

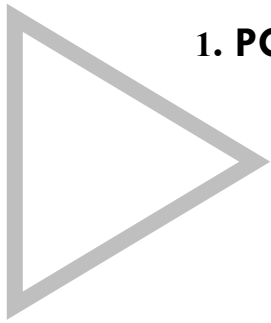
Southern New England United Church of Christ Conference  
Middlesex Association

December 8, 2021

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*“God is able to provide you with every blessing, so that  
having all sufficiency in all things at all times,  
you may abound in every good work.”  
(2 Corinthians 9:8)*



## 1. POSITION POSTING

- a. LISTING INFORMATION
- b. SCOPE OF WORK
- c. COMPENSATION & SUPPORT
- d. WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?

### 1a. LISTING INFORMATION

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**Church name:** First Congregational Church of Westbrook (Westbrook Congregational Church)

**Street address:** 1166 Boston Post Road Westbrook, CT 06498

**Supplemental web links:**

- Website: <http://westconchurch.org>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WestbrookCongregationalChurchCt/>

**Conference:**

Southern New England UCC  
125 Sherman Street Hartford, CT 06105

<http://www.sneucc.org>

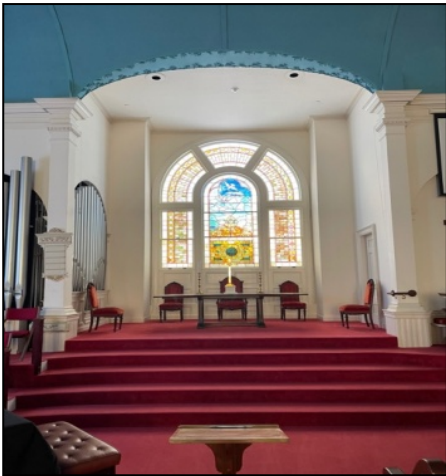
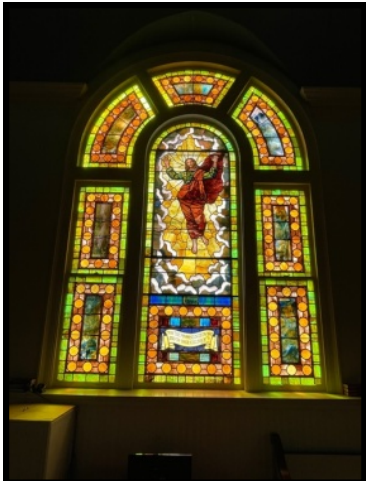
Area Conference Minister: Rev. Isaac Lawson ([lawsoni@sneucc.org](mailto:lawsoni@sneucc.org))

**Association:** Middlesex Association

**Summary Ministry Description:**

*Our church is a covenantal church. Although our membership includes those of varying faith backgrounds and individual beliefs, we agree "to walk together in Christian love and sincerity, and to support the church so far as we are able by our prayers, our presence, our gifts and our service". Not only do we strive to retain our existing congregants, we understand that it is very important to find ways to attract youth and new families to join us in Christian faith. We have recently committed to be a mission-driven church. We are actively developing our community service programs and outreach activities, most notably the operation of a Shoreline Soup Kitchen and Pantry (SSKP) meal site. We are seeking a pastor who is willing to both **join and be active** within our community to draw us even closer as a congregation.*

**Photographs:**



**What we value about living in our area**

*Westbrook is a small town with a big family feel. We have a tight-knit community year-round as well as a strong seasonal population. We are blessed as our membership also consists of parishioners from multiple towns surrounding Westbrook. We are located halfway between New York City and Boston right along Interstate 95. Our town offers multiple beaches to enjoy, several marinas, recreational activities and a variety of restaurants to please any palate. There are also two local outlet shopping centers and several grocery stores within five miles. Our taxes are quite reasonable as well.*

**Current size of membership:**

- 150

**Languages:**

- Our primary language is English but a bilingual (Spanish) leader could help us reach our growing Hispanic population as well.

**Position Title and Duration:**

- Settled – a called position intended for longer-term ministry in which the minister moves church membership to the congregation and moves standing to related association

**Compensation Level:**

- Full Time

**Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines?**

- The total support package is consistent with conference compensation guidelines.

## **1b. SCOPE OF WORK**

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1. Lead 10:00am Sunday Worship Service both virtual and in person (with monthly Communion)
  - Worship is also broadcast via Zoom and posted to Facebook, with the pastor responsible for sending the weekly worship and virtual coffee hour links (as applicable) to the congregation.
  - Ensure the recorded service is delivered to Comcast to be broadcast on local cable TV later in the week.
2. Additional Services expected:
  - Monthly healing service (currently on hold due to Covid)
  - Maundy Thursday
  - Ash Wednesday
  - Two Easter Services (sunrise at beach with youth group and 10am Sanctuary)
  - Longest Night service
  - Christmas Eve Service(s) (5pm and/or 7:30pm and/or 11pm)
  - Second service on Sunday, if deemed necessary
3. Provide pastoral services for weddings, funerals and baptisms.
4. Provide counseling and/or referral in crisis situations.
5. Visit hospitalized and home bound members as well as make other pastoral calls.
6. Deliver communion to home bound members as requested.
7. Provide leadership for Church staff.
8. Attend all standing committee meetings (Deacons, Trustees, Cabinet, Mission and Planning).
9. Conduct twice monthly confirmation class.
10. Facilitate coordination and growth of our Youth Group and Sunday School programs.
11. Provide weekly blast communication to the congregation.
12. Provide Prayer Chain communication and updates.
13. Coordinate/lead small groups throughout the year.
14. Participate with the laity in representing the congregation in Association and Conference matters.

15. Confer with interim/bridge minister for smooth transition.

16. Continue newsletter communications.

17. Continue social media communications.

### **Core Competencies:**

We are praying for a settled pastor who is able to preach the Gospel with love, and is someone who is a true student of the bible. Our prayer is for a community focused leader that can bring us all together by delivering pastoral care with both compassion and empathy.

## **1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT**

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### **Benefits:**

#### **Salary plus Benefits**

- The First Congregational Church of Westbrook strives to meet the compensation guidelines set forth by the UCC. Our compensation package includes a base salary and benefits and is negotiable based on experience and the candidate's requirements for benefits. The church is willing to adjust the compensation specifics in a manner mutually agreeable to the minister and the church; and/or a manner that takes maximum advantage of tax liability questions. The package includes up to one week of vacation for every three months of service (4 weeks) and one week of continuing education leave for every six months of service (2 weeks).
- We are looking for a minister who is willing to live within the community that our church serves or within a short commuting distance of the church. A housing allowance is negotiable.
- There are many opportunities for clergy support within the SNEUCC conference. These include several Clergy Community of Practice (CCOP) groups as well as other formal and informal gatherings such as seminars and retreats. Also available are clergy peer groups in the Middlesex Association and Valley Shore Clergy.

## **1d. WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?**

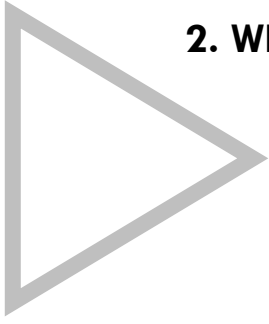
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We are looking forward to working with our new minister to engage our community both young and old. We wish to revitalize our youth ministry as well as actively retain our existing congregation. We have made the commitment to be a mission-driven church and are looking forward to exploring opportunities which will strengthen and expand our mission initiatives. We see ourselves as a kind, caring congregation, steeped in traditions, both old and new. We recently voted unanimously that our church be designated as Open and Affirming. We wish to grow our church family by being able to keep some of our older traditions while possibly starting new traditions that will make all feel welcome. We envision a new minister who is energetic, enthusiastic and an outgoing leader who is willing to be an active part of our church community as well as the community at large. We believe that God is calling our minister to help our members reconnect with one another and work together to address the needs of our community. Although English is our primary language, we believe a minister with some proficiency in Spanish would be a huge asset. We have a growing Hispanic community in Westbrook and we would love to reach out and make them feel welcome within our church.

Based on what we have learned about who our church is, who our church's neighbor is, and who God is calling our church to become, the following four areas of excellence were selected from The Marks of Faithful & Effective Ministers for our next minister to display:

- Exhibiting a spiritual foundation and ongoing spiritual practice
- Engaging sacred stories and traditions
- Caring for all creation
- Strengthening inter- and intra- personal assets

We are looking for a minister to preach the Gospel and deliver a Bible-based, inspiring sermon that is relevant to today's world and helps guide us in living by the Gospel day-to-day. The minister we are seeking will help us continue to embrace the Holy Spirit.



## **2. WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME?**

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37 NRSV)

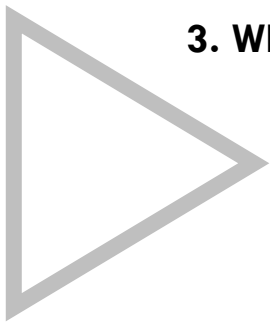
**Who is God calling you to become as a congregation? Describe how God is calling you to reach out to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of your community and congregation.**

Westbrook Congregational Church is reintroducing ourselves to the Westbrook community as a community-based, mission-driven church that welcomes everyone.

***"We're still open . . . "***

Social outreach will now be a full church undertaking, no longer just the responsibility of a Missions Committee. Our ONA task force worked tirelessly throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, culminating in the unanimous adoption of our Open and Affirming Covenant. Our shoreline meal site was restructured to serve the community throughout the pandemic by preparing to-go meals for those in need. Despite our kitchen recently undergoing renovations, we were able to work with our local fire department and utilize their kitchen in order to continue to serve meals to our community. We are committed to showing our congregation and community that WCC is a place of spiritual renewal, safety and familiarity, encouraging members to openly discuss their spiritual journeys and become part of the Mission-driven church ideal. Church leadership, both pastoral and lay, recognize the major challenges faced by all churches today: loss of membership and waning financial commitment, the loss of influence and impact the church held in previous generations, etc. Leadership understands the need for adaptation, willingness to change and consideration of new strategies for growth and impact.





### **3. WHO ARE WE NOW?**

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39 NRSV)

- a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS
- b. 11-YEAR REPORT
- c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS
- d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING
- e. CHURCH FINANCES
- f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### **3a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS**

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**Describe your congregation’s life of faith.**

##### **Our Church Vision Statement**

To be a people inspired by the Holy Spirit;  
Passionately committed to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ;  
Faithfully living the Great Commandment;  
And through whom God brings his kingdom on earth.

##### **Our Mission Statement**

Inviting all to connect, through love and service to God,  
to one another and to our community.

- Our congregation is a resilient family. We have a strong core of passionate members dedicated to the life of our church. Through small group studies, our Stephen Ministry program and a powerful prayer chain, we strive to maintain our Christian faith on a daily basis. We rely on one another; we pray for one another and we count on one another. Our worship services are joyful gatherings. Despite the logistical inability to gather within the church walls for our traditional Sunday worship service during the height of the pandemic, we found ways to worship together.
- The sermon is the focus of our worship service. It involves the congregation and relates to the daily lives of everyone regardless of age or life circumstances and reflects our times. We believe that a sermon should engage the listener and aid them in discovering new ways to discern God's will. For example, a very recent baptism involved multiple church members and brought true joy to all that witnessed and participated. We foresee being able to return to in-person small group Bible studies for our adults in the not-too-distant-future. We have a strong need to revitalize our educational programs for our youth and will rely on our new minister to take part in this endeavor. Our Boards of Trustees, Deacons, Cabinet and Mission and Planning each meet on a regularly-

scheduled monthly basis. Special meetings will be scheduled, when needed, if quick decision-making or action needs to be taken to avert any crisis. Navigating the unpredictable times associated with the Covid-19 pandemic as a church family truly demonstrated our abilities to work together and act quickly in order to serve the pastoral needs of our community. We learned new technology which allowed us to provide a weekly service and to keep open a constant line of communication through weekly prayer. Our commitment to one another allowed for this accomplishment! We will happily provide a copy of our organizational structure and/or bylaws to our new minister.

### **3b. 11-YEAR REPORT**

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- Not available at this time.

### **3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS**

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**Describe those who participate in your church.**

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	150	X
Number of active non-members:	35	X
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	185	

**Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:**

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	70%	X
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	20%	X
Less than 5 years:	10%	X

**Percentage of adults in various household types:**

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	5%	X
Households with minors:	10%	X
Single adults age 35-65:	2%	X
Joint households with no minors:	75%	X
Single adults over 65:	8%	X

**Education level of adult participants by percentage:**

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	95%	X
College:	60%	X
Graduate School:	15%	X
Specialty Training:	15%	X

**Percentage of adults in various employment types:**

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	65%	X
Adults who are retired:	30%	X
Adults who are not fully employed:	5%	X

**Describe the range of occupations of working adults in the congregation:**

- We are very proud that our adult congregation includes a wide range of occupations. We consider ourselves very fortunate to have skilled laborers, teachers, administrative staff, business executives and health care professionals, all of whom are willing to assist the congregation.

**Describe the mix of ethnic heritages in your congregation, and the overall racial make-up. What does diversity mean in your context? Has your congregation recently had a conversation about welcoming diversity, or do you plan to hold one on the near future?**

- Although a variety of ethnicities are represented, our congregation does lack diversity. Our Westbrook community has a growing Hispanic population and finding a way to include this population is one of our newest missions.

**3d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING (Many groups or classes are Pre-Covid numbers)**

Complete the following chart. Please leave blank any fields that are not applicable to your congregation.

Ways of Gathering	Estimated number of people involved in attendance	Who plans each of the listed gatherings? <i>(list any and all worship planners, such as various lay leaders, pastors, musicians, other staff)</i>
Adult Groups or Classes	40	Pastor and lay leaders
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>	2	Pastor and Deacons
Children’s Groups or Classes	12	Pastor and lay leaders
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	150	Pastor, Deacons and Youth Group
Church-wide Meals		
Choirs and Music Groups	35	Music Director, Choirs
Church-based Bible Study	25	Pastor and lay leaders
Communion <i>(served how often?)</i>	1x/mo	Pastor and Deacons
Community Meals	55 per week	Through Shoreline Soup Kitchen

Confirmation ( <i>number confirmed last year</i> )	3	Pastor
Drama or Dance Program		
Funerals ( <i>number last year</i> )	6	Pastor, Deacons
Intergenerational Groups		
Outdoor Worship		
Prayer or Meditation Groups		
Public Advocacy Work		
Retreats		
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community		
Weddings ( <i>number last year</i> )	0	
Worship (time slot: 9:45 AM)	80	ALL
Young Adult Groups or Classes		
Youth Groups or Classes	10	Youth Leaders

**List all members or regular participants in your congregation who are ordained, licensed, or commissioned ministers. Indicate those with current United Church of Christ Three-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a congregation) or Four-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a ministry beyond a congregation).**

Name	Three- or Four-Way Covenant?	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired?
Barbara Noyes	No		Pulpit Supply	Y
Price Van der Swaagh	No		Pulpit Supply	N

**If one or more previous pastors or retired ministers currently hold membership in the church, describe their role(s) in the life of the congregation:**

- N/A

List all current staff, including ministers. Exclude the position you are seeking to fill. Indicate which staff person serves as head of staff.

Staff Position	Head of Staff?	Compensation (full time, part time, volunteer)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
Office Administrator	No	Part-time	Senior Minister	6.5 years
Sexton	No	Part-time	Senior Minister	1 year
Faith Community Nurse	No	Part-time	Senior Minister	14 years
Organist/Choir Director	No	Part-time	Senior Minister	1 month
Minister of Faith Formation	No	Part-time	Senior Minister	Currently Open
Bell Choir Director	No	Part-time	Senior Minister	4 years

### REFLECTION

Westbrook Congregational Church is a community-based church, not a destination church. Everyone brings their talents to support the church in any way they can. We wish to retain our precious members but it is obvious that our church family also needs to grow. We need to reach out to our *entire* community more effectively and let them know that they are welcome and invited to join us. Revitalization of our youth ministries is also an essential element to the life and success of our church.

### 3e. CHURCH FINANCES

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Current annual income (dollars used during most recent fiscal year)

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$ 191,500.00
Endowment Proceeds ( <i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i> )	\$ 32,000.00
Endowment Draw ( <i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, "drawing down the principal"</i> )	\$ 0.00
Fundraising Events	\$ 3,000.00

Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$
Grants	\$35,000.00
Rentals of Church Building	\$4,200.00
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$ N/A
Support from Related Organizations (e.g. Women's Group)	\$ 0.00
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$ N/A
Other (specify): Rental property income (Pratt House)	\$ 7,500.00
Other (specify):	\$ N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 273,200.00</b>

**Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year):**

- \$ 262,105.00

*Most recent church budget can be provided, by request.*

**Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support. What is the percentage?**

- Total ministerial support represents 47% (\$122,250.00) of our total budgeted expenses.

**Has the church ever failed to pay its financial obligations to a minister of the church?**

- No

**Is your church 5-for-5, i.e. does it include each of the following contributions during the church year? (indicate those included during the most recent fiscal year)**

- Yes                    Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM – Basic Support)
- Yes (in past)        One Great Hour of Sharing
- No                      Strengthen the Church
- No                      Neighbors in Need
- No                      Christmas Fund

**In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered? If calculated as a percentage of operating budget, what is that percentage?**

- We base the percentage on Church membership with a per member fee assessment. The WCC contribution is the equivalent of 3.8% of current budget.

**What is the church’s current indebtedness?**

- Total amount of loan debt: None
- Reason for debt: N/A
- Are capital and other payments current? Yes

**If a building program is projected or underway, describe it, including the projected start/end date of the building project and the total project budget.**

- N/A

**If the church has had capital campaigns in the last ten years, describe:**

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
2010-2012	Stained Glass Window Refurbishment	\$100,000	\$130,000	No \$ from operating budget utilized to successfully complete project. Beautification.

**If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe:**

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
N/A	N/A	\$	\$	

**Describe the prominent mission component(s) involved in the most recent (or current) capital campaign.**

- The stained-glass project was both a necessity and a feature benefitting the aesthetics of the church. There has been some discussion of organ refurbishment - this has yet to be formally proposed as the repair expense is prohibitive and may have little impact on mission and outreach.
- There are no capital campaign plans currently.



**Does your church have an endowment?**

- Yes

**What is the market value of the assets?**

- Current review: approximately \$750,000.00

**Are funds drawn as needed, regularly, or under certain circumstances?**

- Currently, we are receiving investment income from dividends, not drawing on principle.

**What is the percentage rate of draw (last year, compared to 5 years ago)?**

- N/A

**Describe draw on endowment, if any, to meet operating budget expenses for the most recent year and the past five years:**

- There is no draw down of capital at this time, only dividend proceeds.

**At the current rate of draw, how long might the endowment last?**

- The endowment might last five years or less if substantial commitment is needed.
- Thirty-two thousand dollars from proceeds is now used for operations. Increasing this amount would likely require use of principle. The church will need to assess ministry needs, determine appropriate and essential paid staff and lay commitment to accomplish objectives and evaluate use of endowment for ministry, either as an essential operational need or as a mission objective.

**Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:**

The Board of Trustees has discussed the possible need and use of endowment funds. This requires congregational discussion and explanation of the benefits in energizing the congregation.

**Other Assets**

- Reserves (savings): \$ 49,325.00
- Investments (other than endowment): \$ 0.00
- Does your church have a parsonage? No
- Describe all buildings owned by the church:  
The Pratt House is a two-family rental property adjacent to the church.

- Describe non-owned buildings or space used or rented by the church:  
None

### **Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs?**

The church building itself, which includes the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall, is wheelchair accessible.

### **Reflection: After reviewing the church's finances and assets described above, what does this information reflect about your congregation's mission and ministry?**

As it is with other churches, our budget has been negatively affected by the Covid pandemic. The transition to online ministry during Covid has substantially altered the landscape and, at this time, the long-term impact is unclear. Attendance and support have decreased over the last few years. Financial support has declined both due to Covid and aging of the congregation. It's important to note that when our church has building needs not supported by the budget, that through aggressive fundraising, generous benefactors and grants from a local foundation, projects are often financed without impact to the church budget. Where there is a will, there is a way at Westbrook Congregational Church!

## **3f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

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The First Congregational Church of Westbrook was organized on June 29, 1726 by Reverend William Worthington and fourteen charter members consisting of eight women and six men. During its 295 year history, there have only been twenty-six resident ministers. During the last sixty-one years, there have only been four settled pastors, three of them from 1960-2013. The last eight years have been quite unsettling as we have had an interim pastor, a settled pastor, another interim pastor and now a bridge minister to guide us while we search for our settled pastor. These multiple changes in a relatively short time frame represent the most important events in our church in the last ten years. Although the constant changes may have at times divided our congregation, our core leaders have worked diligently to bring us back together for the good of the congregation and the community. We have learned new technology in order to continue to reach out to our members. Facebook, Zoom, weekly emails, a monthly newsletter and several other social media platforms have been utilized. Surveys, introduced through either our weekly service or emails, have been helpful when attempting to resolve conflict. We have initiated small focus groups and restorative circles as forms of safe communication avenues where all opinions are valued. Our Cabinet, Deacons, Trustees and Mission and

Planning continue to meet on a monthly basis in order to stay in touch with the needs of the church and will meet more frequently if the need arises. The members that serve on these boards take great care to ensure that we all work together. Our meal site has continued to serve our community by creating take-out meals so no one goes hungry. Most recently, our church kitchen has been under renovation so several of our members arranged to utilize the local fire departments' kitchen to prepare and serve the take-out meals. Even though "where two or three are gathered, there will be disagreement . . ." our congregation values the ability for all to work together to resolve whatever conflict may arise.

**Ministerial History** *(include all previous ministerial staff for the past 30 years)*

Staff member's name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
William Zito	1960-1970	Yes
Robert Van Gorder	1970 -1992	Yes
John Wilson	1993-2013	Yes
Jan Gregory-Charpentier	2015-2020	Yes

**Has any past leader left under pressure or by involuntary termination?**

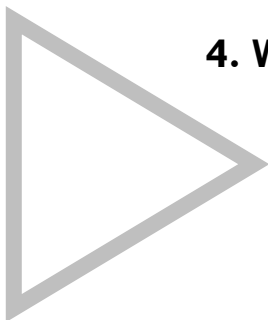
- No

**Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?**

- No

**Has a past pastor been the subject of a Fitness Review while at your church?**

- No



**4. WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?**

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39 NRSV)

a. COMMUNITY VISION

## **4a. COMMUNITY VISION**

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How do the relationships and activities of your congregation extend outward in service and advocacy? Describe your congregation's participation in ecumenical and interfaith activities (with other denominations and religious groups, local and regional).

Although the Covid Pandemic has limited our direct participation in several community outreach programs, we have still been able to contribute. We celebrate the fact that our meal site has continued to operate. Our Outreach Giving Tree at Christmas helps our local Family and Children Services department. Bag-it Sunday and our contributions to the local Soup Kitchen have also continued. The WCC pastor has offered blessings at community events such as the annual Memorial Day parade and the Christmas parade. Our Youth Group was once again able to travel in July 2021 with Group Mission Trips to serve the needs of another community. We remain the organization sponsor for our local Boy Scout Troop and continue to participate in One Great Hour of Sharing. Al-Anon, Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous have been able to meet in person in our church once again. We have participated with other faiths in our community at our annual outdoor Tree Lighting festivities in December, as well as participated with the Catholic Church in our local high school's Baccalaureate ceremony.

New paths of outreach are emerging as well! Our Congregation recently voted unanimously to proclaim our church as an Open and Affirming Church. Further, October 2021 brought about a "Blessing Box"; a hand-made, elevated wooden box on the church property stocked with non-perishable food available to anyone in need.

As people become more comfortable and feel safe gathering once again, we wish to re-establish several of our traditions which we have been forced to pause. We are anxious to return to in-person Coffee Hour immediately following our weekly service. We also plan to revitalize our participation in the annual Crop Walk. Traditions such as our Harvest Fair and Tag Sale, our Parents' Day out for Christmas shopping (available to the entire community), our Church bazaar at Christmas, and several other in-person ministries will be able to restart. We are hoping that once again our minister will be able to step outside our church building on Ash Wednesday to place ashes on the foreheads of anyone in the community seeking that tradition via a drive-through.

Community ministry is our primary focus. We pray that the scope of work that we have laid out for our new full-time minister will be successfully fulfilled with the help of the congregation.

We stand by our Mission Statement: "Inviting all to connect, through love and service to God, to one another and to our community." We are looking for a minister that will assist us in being a mission-driven church.

## **5. REFERENCES**

Name up to three people who have agreed to serve as phone and written references. Advise the three references: “The contact information you provide may be shared publicly. Please use contact information that you feel comfortable giving to candidates so they can reach you with their questions.”

Make sure they are not members of your church but are persons who know your church well enough to be helpful to candidates seeking more information. Request a letter from each reference in answer to the four prompts below. Attach the letters (up to three) as desired.

### **REFERENCE 1**

David and Elizabeth Stoner  
Members 2007-2019 (Left due to a physical relocation)

### **REFERENCE 2**

Reverend Amy Hollis  
Executive Director, Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Panties

### **REFERENCE 3**

Paul Winch  
Westbrook Board of Finance  
Westbrook Library Board of Trustees  
The Westbrook Foundation (Chairperson)

## **Reference 1**

### ***Background Overview:***

We moved to Old Saybrook in 2006, and immediately began the search to find a new church. We had been members of the Presbyterian Church in New Canaan for 34 years, and both of us held many significant positions. David was Chair of stewardship, The Board of Trustees, member of the Session and served for seven years as Clerk of Session under two different pastors. Elizabeth served on the Board of Deacons, served three years as Chair of the Deacons, and most importantly, served as Chair of the Pastor Search Committee when the founding and beloved Pastor retired after 40 years.

We thought we preferred a large church, with a million dollar annual budget and a congregation of 750-1,000. That doesn't exist on the shoreline. Neither does a Presbyterian Church. But what does exist is a quality of life and (we learned through experience) and interpersonal relationships unsurpassed in today's conflicted world.

### ***Describe some areas of strength in this church's ministry.***

We joined several neighbors in attending various churches in Old Saybrook and Essex, but none to our liking for various reasons. Someone said "why don't you try the Westbrook Congregational church?" We did, and found excellent preaching with a biblically based sermon, but with a relationship to today's problems and issues. We found a most welcoming congregation. We always stayed after church for the coffee hour, and many times found ourselves as one of the last ones closing the door. It was a welcoming congregation, welcoming everyone without questions about sexuality or orientation. We/they accepted everyone. We found a music program featuring hymns we knew and hymns which related to the sermon sung by a wonderfully talented and caring group, which took great pride and joy in making the service vibrant and meaningful. John Wilson, the minister, often said if the choir brings their "A" game, everyone talks about it. When he alone brings his "A" game, there are few comments.

We joined various committees, and people worked together in a cooperative and supportive manner, doing what was best for the congregation, the church and/or the community. In our opinion, it was best of all worlds, a caring, warm and supportive congregation and a life style second to none.

### ***Describe some areas for improvement in this church's ministry.***

In 2019, we moved from Old Saybrook to Covenant Living of Cromwell, a senior residence providing a continuum of care. So the following comments are not from first hand experience but from our observations from a distance and discussions with the existing congregants.

We never experienced or participated in the youth group programs when we were active members as our children were grown and had their own families. But the youth group was a strong part of the church, and the congregation actively supported their programs and annual trip. With the advent of COVID, and the strong core group going to college or moving on, the

program dwindled and today needs to be rekindled and reconstituted. There is little or no program in other Westbrook churches today, and an active youth program is a vital element in creating both youth activities and parental involvement, attendance, and stewardship.

COVID again is to blame for the reduction in the music program, but it is a key element to revitalizing the worship service and involvement. Much of the talent is still in town, and could again be a way to making the worship service more meaningful.

And lastly, it all begins with the leadership from the pulpit. A vibrant, energetic, dynamic leader is needed. The congregation is aging, and exciting leadership is needed to generate the enthusiasm and excitement of Christian leadership for all ages in the town of Westbrook and surrounding communities.

***Describe a significant experience you have had of this church's ministry.***

In 2007/8 it became evident that the beautiful stained glass windows in the sanctuary and hallway needed to be restored. The lead was crumbling, several pieces were cracked, the window frames were 115 years old and who knew what condition they were in. It appeared that we needed over \$80,000 to make the necessary repairs. And restoration would take up to two years by artisans, probably not available in the area. "It couldn't be done"! "We'll never raise the money"! Where do we find the talent to restore"? "What if one breaks?" Doom and gloom. But John Wilson was in support, and Elizabeth and I undertook the project. First we found the artisan, and then we raised over \$100,000. Slowly you could sense the excitement of the congregation as more and more people got behind the project. Many older members had moved or left town, but they contributed. The Westbrook Foundation helped with a sizable contribution, and before you knew it, the first main window was removed for renovation. Four months later it was reinstalled, totally rebuilt and everyone could see a new horizon. The project was completed on time and under budget. And the artisan was so excited he created a series of windows on the left side of the sanctuary which wasn't part of the initial project.

What was learned? That this congregation can and will do anything when they are truly motivated. It was truly an exciting, significant experience in the life of the church, and something everyone still enjoys today.

David and Elizabeth Stoner

Members 2007-2019 (Left due to a physical relocation)

Participation at Westbrook Congregational Church

DOS: Chair, Board of Trustees, Member of Cabinet

EES: Member of Search Committee after John Wilson's retirement, Board of Deacons

DOS/EES: Principals in restoration of stained glass windows

## **REFERENCE 2**

I am the Executive Director of the nonprofit which is grateful for the congregation's support as a Host Site for a Meal Site

### **Describe some areas of strength in this church's ministry.**

I am grateful for the congregation's involvement in the wider community. It is an honor to have their support as a host-site for a Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries (SSKP) Meal Site which prepares and shares Food and Fellowship every Friday night to neighbors in need. Through this ministry and more the congregation puts their faith in action.

The pandemic shifted our meal distribution across all sites to meals-to-go. Before that happened (and likely in the future) Westbrook Congregational Church went above just providing a meal. Once a month they hosted an interactive fellowship opportunity the evening of the meal, such as a game nights. SSKP recognizes that food and fellowship go hand-in-hand.

### **Describe some areas for improvement in this church's ministry.**

I do not know of areas for improvement. At present the church is in the process of remodeling the kitchen because they assessed a need to better serve the community. The remodeled kitchen will open opportunities to feed people within the congregation as well as the wider community, living the teachings of Jesus to "feed my people."

### **Describe a significant experience you have had of this church's ministry.**

I have had the opportunity to witness the faith in action at the meal site as well as having had the joy of worshiping together. As a colleague in ministry, I can also attest to the wonderful collegial relationship in our region through the Valley Shore Clergy Association.

### **Anything else you wish to share.**

I look forward to celebrating with Westbrook UCC as they welcome a new pastor. Please be in touch if I can answer any questions.

Reverend Amy Hollis  
Executive Director  
Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Panties

## **REFERENCE 3**

Currently I am member of the following organizations;

### **Municipal**

Westbrook Board of Finance

Westbrook Library Board of Trustees

### **Private**

The Westbrook Foundation (Chairperson)



Professionally, primarily in telecommunications and Healthcare..

Former member of Westbrook Congregational Church (WCC). Served on Board of Trustees for three years. Our grandchildren were Baptized and Confirmed by WCC.

My current position at Westbrook Foundation allows me frequent contact with church leadership. Foundation has provided Grants to church, allowing them to grow their infrastructure to serve the community. Specifically, hosting weekly Shoreline Soup Kitchen meal distribution.

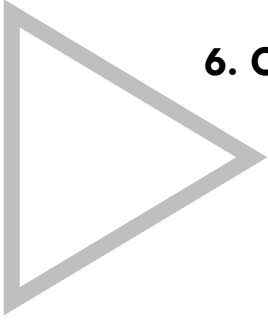
The WCC has done a tremendous job in teaching its Youth the importance of giving back to the community. The church for many years has completed numerous Mission Trips, bringing local high school members to distant parts of the country, to serve local community groups by repairing houses and helping to rebuild lives.

Hopefully, the next full time minister will embrace the past successes and most importantly, develop new programs to sustain the church and surrounding community.

I look forward in speaking with prospective Pastors through the hiring process.

Thank you for the opportunity to assist the WCC

Paul Winch



## **6. CLOSING THOUGHTS**

- a. CLOSING PRAYER
- b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT
- c. CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION VALIDATION

### **6a. CLOSING PRAYER**

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Isaiah 6:8

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”

Naming Jesus as Lord is the start of a theological commitment. Living as though He is Lord, demands day-by-day forgiving, rescuing, and transforming grace. We pray our next Settled Pastor will guide our congregation into a committed future in spreading our Lord's word, and be committed to our congregation and community.

In this we pray, Amen

### **6b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

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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 profile 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 suitable new minister 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.

#### **1. Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile?**

Pastoral Search Committee

**Signed:**

Cheryl Ceplak  
Pastoral Search Committee Chairwoman  
December 8, 2021

## **6c. VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION**

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The congregation is currently in good standing with the association / conference named.

Staff Comment: Yes

To the best of my knowledge, ministerial history information is complete.

Staff Comment: Yes

To the best of my knowledge, available church financial information is presented thoroughly.

Staff Comment: Yes

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature:

Name / Title: Rev. Isaac Lawson, Area Conference Minister, South Central, SNEUCC

Email: [lawsoni@sneucc.org](mailto:lawsoni@sneucc.org)

Phone:

Date: 12/17/21

**UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**



This document is created through support to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and is only possible through the covenantal relationships of all settings of the United Church of Christ.

*"Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God!'" – Mark 11:22*