



Southern New England Conference
United Church of Christ
Living the Love & Justice of Jesus

Local Church Profile for Churches Seeking an Interim Pastor

Church Information

Full Name: Ledyard Congregational Church
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Additional Denominational Affiliations:

UCC Conference: Southern New England
Association: New London
Area Conference Minister Name: Rev. Isaac Lawson
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Position Details

In a paragraph or two for each item, please answer the following prompts.

- 1. Describe the ministry position for which you are seeking a pastor.** *(This will be the first impression most candidates have of you. Highlight your gifts and graces as well as your needs so that candidates have the best sense of connection to and curiosity about your position. Include keywords that will help candidates search. It must be **no more than 2,000 characters, including punctuation and spaces, and in a single, unformatted paragraph**).*

Ledyard Congregational Church is known as the church in the heart of the community because physically, that is exactly where we are located in town.

Local missions and community outreach play large roles in our church. We host free community meals, many groups use our building throughout the week, and a number of our members are very active in our local food pantry. We have hosted a refugee family, members have taken in people in need, and we are always collecting items for donations to the needy in our town and county.

LCC has been affected by many of the same issues as other churches: aging population, a lack of families, loss of old members, and too few new members. We have not fully recovered from Covid in that several members have gotten out of the habit of attending church in person. We miss the fellowship with our “stay at home” members and are always happy to see them when they do choose to attend in person. The political atmosphere of the past few years has also resulted in the loss of some

members. While we recognized that more traditional forms of governance did not entice members to participate, experiments with a less structured organization were not well received and caused much confusion.

Despite these issues, the LCC church family has been amazingly resilient, dedicated to one another and dedicated to the church as a whole. Recent visitors have become regular attendees. They were attracted to our sense of family, how generously they were welcomed into the fold, and how genuine we have been in getting to know them and making them feel at home. One woman commented that she was amazed at the number of people who addressed her by name. To give you an even better idea of the strength of the ties that bind our church, several members who have opted to worship elsewhere still join in fellowship and church activities.

As is to be expected with any group of people, opinions differ, and conflicts arise. It would be important to us that the interim help us understand our past conflicts and help us learn how to identify and address challenges and problems before they become larger issues.

In summary, we are seeking an interim pastor to help us prepare for a new settled pastor who can guide the church to continue to serve God, our church members, our local community, and missions as a whole. As we search for our new pastor, we would appreciate guidance from the interim to help us:

discern our current needs and heal from past issues so that we can focus on finding a new pastor to help the church grow in body, spirit and soul;

balance our outward facing role in the community with the inward facing work needed to find a new church leader;

improve our communication with regard to what information should be shared with the body and how best to share it;

figure out the leadership style that will suit the body as a whole; and

discern the best governance practices to organize and effectively run our ministry.

Our church has soldiered through quite a bit in the past five or six years. We have remembered the lives of the many we have lost, we have endured the falling away of long time members and have welcomed too few new members. We are still searching for the leadership, organization and governance that fits us best. We have healing to do and a church to grow and seek the shepherd who can help us find the pastor who can guide us into the future.

2. Name 3 core competencies that you feel you will need in your Interim Pastor.

Faith. We need an interim to restore and build our faith. Because our church is so outward focused, we often are too busy doing church things (being Marthas) rather than being the church (being Marys).

Leadership. We need an interim with strong leadership skills to help guide us in finding a new pastor. In addition to being a leader, we would look to the interim for guidance in discerning the leadership style that best fits our needs. We need an interim who will help us to discern our strengths and weaknesses, to identify our issues and to figure out solutions, and to help us have better relationships in the church body.

Communication. We need an interim with strong communication skills. We believe that better communication skills are key to identifying and dealing with issues, to maintaining a sense of family, and to efficiently and effectively manage the day-to-day operations of the church. We would look to the interim to help us understand the best ways to communicate with each other and to make sure that information is relayed in a timely and appropriate manner.

3. What aspects of the 5 tasks of interim ministry (listed in the instructions sheet) do you anticipate being the focus of your interim time?

In order of importance, we believe our needs are

Leadership: Our ministry is searching for the leadership and structure that will allow us to move forward in our thinking and worship. We look forward to the interim aiding us in identifying the gifts, skills and competencies we need to endure and grow.

Future: We will look to the interim to help us determine not only what we need in a new pastor, but to understand the effects of past ministries on our church so we can avoid making past mistakes.

Mission: With the search for a new minister we must revisit our mission and purpose to God, to our members and to the community at large.

Heritage: We are a very old church with a history that goes back to the 1700's. It will be important to understand how our past has formed LCC as it stands today, to understand if our history has and is holding back our progress and to create a path forward for future generations.

Connections: As mentioned above, LCC has very strong ties to the local community. We would appreciate input and feedback on our local outreach, on our connections to the church and one another and to other churches in the area.

4. **Position Scope:** Fulltime 3/4 time 1/2 time 1/4 time (may depend on where the interim lives (in our parsonage?) or drives and how far they drive; what they need)

5. **Position Duration:** 12 months 18 months other Until a settled pastor is selected _____

Who We Are

In a paragraph or two for each item, please provide the following.

1. Church's Mission/Covenant Statement (or name that one needs to be developed):

We are united in striving to know the will of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures, and in our purpose to walk in the ways of the Lord, made known or to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim the Gospel to all mankind, exalting the worship of the one true God and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace and the realization of human brotherhood. Depending, as did our ancestors, upon the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, we work and pray for the transformation of the world into the kingdom of God; and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting.

2. Brief Church History:

Ledyard Congregational church is close to celebrating 300 years of worship! In 1725, residents of the north half of Groton received permission to have their own Ecclesiastical Society. The new society placed their new meeting house in the center of North Groton (now Ledyard) and 1729, the first settled minister was installed. In 1772, the parish lost its third settled minister and was unable to find a new settled pastor for several years. This was not unusual as the country was in the midst of and recovering from the Revolutionary War.

Eager for a fresh start, the church installed Rev. Timothy Tuttle in 1810. Membership steadily increased, encouraged by several revivals, and by 1843 the old meetinghouse was replaced with the structure we now use, more than 175 years later. Rev. Tuttle served over 50 years and taught and inspired several generations, until his passing.

The North Groton Society incorporated as the Town of Ledyard in 1836. Henry Bill, a publisher in Norwich, gave the town a public library in 1867 which was actually housed in the church balcony where it remained until 1893. The church building also served as an extension of Town Hall and many town meetings were held in Social Hall. In the 1960s, our building was also used as classroom space to help alleviate overcrowding in the public schools.

In 1874, Mr. Bill gave the church the Bill Parsonage, his childhood home. We are unique in still having an Ecclesiastical Society and overseeing the parsonage property, maintaining this beautiful and historic part of our church and town. He also hosted "Bill Dinners" which continue on today in our free community meals and our long standing Strawberry Supper.

Over the years, as membership increased, the church building was expanded. In the late 1960s, our current Fellowship Hall was built, however it was separated from the main building by the road through town. Eventually, the town road was moved and in the 1990s Fellowship Hall and the main building were connected by the Crawford Wing which added several rooms for Sunday school classes, a church library, and a music room. For 50 years LCC hosted a well-attended day care and pre-school

program used by several families in town. For over 70 years, LCC was also an integral part of the Ledyard Town Fair, donating our buildings and land for use.

Our long history has certainly shaped many LCC congregations. Nearly 300 years of perseverance, generosity, tradition, and heart have brought us into the 21 century. We are eager to continue to build on our past while adapting to and meeting the challenges of being a place to worship in modern times.

3. 2-3 Significant Events:

Open and Affirming. Approximately 12 years ago, our church developed an Open and Affirming statement, officially became ONA, and has been faithful in welcoming all people to our family. We did lose some members by taking this stance, but we firmly believed that God's love is for all, and it was important to be inclusive.

Feeding the hungry. LCC has always felt the importance of feeding the hungry; we provide holiday meals to many families and our building has been used to organize food collections and food drives for several years. Some 5 or 6 years ago, our church took on the task of revitalizing the town food pantry. Church and community members spent countless hours renovating a church outbuilding to move the pantry out of the dingy basement of town hall to a bright, beautiful space. As the pantry grew, the church donated considerable space for food storage and during Covid, nearly the entire building was used for food storage, management and distribution. The pantry has since moved to a town building and many church members continue to volunteer there.

Aiding refugees. LCC played an integral role in sponsoring a Laotian refugee family in the 1990s and was (and still is) currently involved in resettling a family of Syrian refugees. Working with IRIS (Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services) and the community, we found and furnished a home. We have helped the family financially and with all kinds of tasks such as getting the children started in school, driving the family until a member learned to drive and could afford a car, finding jobs, and dealing with the paperwork of being a refugee.

4. Church Strengths:

Amazing community involvement. LCC has been and continues to be central to the life of our town. For countless years, the church housed displays and activities for the Town Fair. We host a lively group of Scouts and have served cookies and hot cocoa at many town Holiday Parades. Community meals and breakfasts are free, and donations are given to charities. As mentioned, many members are still very involved with the town food pantry. People look forward to our annual suppers and events.

Welcoming. LCC is a church body that is incredibly friendly and welcoming. Each visitor is made to feel like they have found home. Guest ministers seem truly happy to return and often comment on how they appreciate our family atmosphere.

Missions. Our missions team is very active and involved with meeting the needs of our local and wider community. From UCC recognized events such as Blanket Sunday to local events such as sponsoring needy families during the holidays, Missions always seems to have something in the works. We have filled backpacks for school children, collected clothing for the homeless, put together food baskets for various holidays, and sent care packages to our military. This past year Missions organized and hosted an Interfaith International Community Dinner to raise awareness of religious and cultural diversity in our community and to raise funds for refugee resettlements.

5. Church Challenges:

Membership. As a longtime member of the community, LCC has many long-time members. Several members now in their 70s and 80s grew up in this church and other members joined over 50 years ago. Like other traditional churches, we have an aging population. We seek guidance for ways to grow our membership, rejoin with those who have fallen away, and attract and retain families. The world seems to be too busy for church so we are looking for ways to inspire people to see church as a place they need for worship, welcome and rest. Also tied in with membership is the need for members to serve on committees. Too few people are doing too much; many hands make light work.

Faith Formation. Hand in hand with attracting families is the need for strong Sunday school and youth programs. In addition, we would like to put in place Faith Formation activities for adults. Our Women's Fellowship group is very active, and we would like to be able to have a Men's Fellowship and Youth Ministry as well.

Finances. As is to be expected, with diminishing church membership comes increasing issues with finances. LCC has two historical buildings to support and something is always in need of fixing or replacing. We would appreciate guidance in how to best approach stewardship and management of our finances in a way that allows us to continue to generously support the community and to ensure the future of the church to do God's work.

6. Experience of Conflict:

Covid certainly highlighted some of the conflicts hidden in our church, from differing attitudes about safety and medicine to different opinions about re-opening and recovery.

A few members of our church have become opposed to our membership in the UCC. They feel that the UCC has become too political and tells the church what to do. They feel that our membership in the UCC has caused us to lose members and to fail to attract new members. It would be helpful if the interim minister could help the church better understand what it means to be in the UCC, to identify the benefits of being in the UCC, and to understand the similarities and differences between the UCC values and beliefs and our own.

Over the past few years, conflicts between the pastor and some church members developed. The author of this document does not know the details of these conflicts but does note that they were strong and deeply felt by the people involved and sensed by other members. As mentioned above, better communication may have helped avert some of these issues and we look for guidance on how to recognize and deal with conflict.

Despite these differences, some of the members who have chosen to worship elsewhere continue to keep ties with the church such as participating in Women's Fellowship and helping at church functions.

7.

1. **Every church has conflict**, some minor, some larger. On a scale of 1-5, where would you rank your church's level of conflict? 2
(Based on this work by Speed Leas 1. Problem to solve 2. Disagreement 3. Contest 4. Fight or Flight 5. Intractable)

2. Please explain why you chose this level.

Despite the closeness of our church members, as with any group of people, conflicts arise. Unfortunately, the political atmosphere of the past several years has affected our church community. Some of our more conservative members felt that the minister was "too political". Other members are of the opinion that the UCC as a whole has also become political and they oppose continuing on as a UCC member. A small number of people did not agree with the minister's approach to certain situations; some of these folks left while others were quite vocal in their opinions to our own church members and to members in other churches. As can be imagined, this was a difficult situation for the minister, the persons involved, and church leadership. Church leadership worked extensively with the pastor and parties involved to remedy the situation but could not reach a conclusion satisfactory to all.

3. Describe your congregation's values and practices when it comes to conflict.

We certainly value the need to discuss and work out issues. Our skills to deal with conflicts, on a small scale and as a congregation as a whole, are lacking. We believe that this difficulty lies in part with communication. Who needs to know about a conflict? How should the information be shared? How much detail should be revealed? How should the matter be addressed? How to help the church heal from losing members to conflict? We would rely on the interim to help us to identify ways to improve in this area so that we can be as unified as possible in calling a new settled pastor.

Basic Church Statistics
Yearly average

	Church Membership	Weekly Worship Attendance	Children & Youth Participation	Adult Ed Participation
Pre-pandemic			Some	Very little to none
2022	90 families 194 active members and non-members	40 avg (high 89/low 22)	Increasing lately	Very little to none

	Income	Overall Budget	Mission Giving	Reserves & Endowment Principals
Pre-pandemic	182K	194K	10K	485K
Current year	148K (Oct)	214K	5K (Oct)	540K

Compensation

Total Compensation Package Amount or Range: \$100 to \$105K

Package offered: Total Package, no additional monetary benefits offered
(choose only one) X Total Package includes optional benefits to be negotiated (if you wish, list here what those optional benefits may be)

Housing:

- Housing allowance only
- Parsonage only
- X Either Parsonage or Housing Allowance Provided

Please explain briefly your process in discerning your compensation.

The compensation offer was discussed by Deacons and Council and is a significant percentage of the overall pastor compensation package as set for 2022.

Church body responsible for hiring the Interim Pastor is: A team of members at large, Deacons and Council members will be assembled.

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Statement of Consent

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.

Susan Burns, Deacon

January 20, 2023

Signature of Search Committee Chairperson
(typed or Jpeg is sufficient)

Date