

# **United Churches of Durham Profile**

**Durham, Connecticut**

**Seeking Settled Pastor**

United Church of Christ and United Methodist Church

January 9, 2023

## LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE CONTENTS

Position Posting

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Consent and Validation

*“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)*

### **1a. LISTING INFORMATION**

Church name: [United Churches of Durham](#)

Street address: [228 Main Street Durham Ct, 06422](#)

### **Supplemental web links:**

Website: <https://www.unitedchurches.net/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/unitedchurchesofdurham>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/>

Email: [the.united.churches@snet.net](mailto:the.united.churches@snet.net)

### **Additional ecumenical affiliations:**

United Churches of Christ

United Methodist Church

### **Conferences:**

Southern New England UCC, New Haven East Consociation

New York Annual Conference, CT District

### **UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person**

Southern New England UCC Conference:

Rev. Margret Hofmeister, Area Conference Minister, Southwest Region, SNEUCC  
hofmeisterm@sneucc

**Summary Ministry Description:**

Our vision for the United Churches of Durham focuses on expanding our ability to welcome and serve the needs of a multi-generational population of worshipers and people from a variety of faith backgrounds. We envision expanding our outreach, influence and networking to new and varied issues and parts of the community. We feel this is essential to sustaining a vibrant and growing congregation. We seek a spiritually based pastor with excellent communication skills and a creative insight into the future. This will undoubtedly assist in providing the guidance and directive energy our congregation and lay leadership team needs.

*We are committed to living fully as a vibrant and growing congregation. We seek a pastor with excellent communication skills and a desire to engage in creative insight into what the future might be. Our intention is to call a pastor with the skills and gifts to assist in providing the guidance and directive energy our congregation and lay leadership team needs to focus on expanding our ability to welcome and serve the needs of a multi-generational population of worshippers and people from a variety of faith backgrounds in our community. One of our main goals is the expansion of our outreach, influence and networking to new and varied issues through parts of the community.'*



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

The United Churches of Durham is a landmark church in the beautiful community of Durham, Connecticut. We are the heart of Durham with a steeple seen for miles around. Our community church is one that generations have long called their 'spiritual home'. For more than 300 years, the faithful have worshiped in our sanctuary.

Our quiet, rural community, with its deep historical roots, emanates a neighborly charm. Durham is strategically located within driving distance of many vibrant urban areas, such as Boston,(2 hours) New

York, (2 hours) New Haven (30 minutes) and Hartford.(30 minutes) There are multiple nearby universities, including Yale, Wesleyan, Quinnipiac, and the University of Connecticut. Nearby are Long Island Sound, Cape Cod, Powder Ridge ski resort and the foliage of New England plus hundreds of miles of hiking trails. We “have it all” with the variety of seasons and a relatively peaceful climate.

Many residents share a powerful spirit of volunteerism, demonstrated by the energy and commitment required to organize the annual Durham Fair - which draws as many as 200,000+ people. Our Fair has been in existence for over 100 years. It is the largest agricultural fair in Connecticut and involves over 1,700 local volunteers. The fair supports many non profit town organizations (including our church) as a major fund-raiser, which results in strong, organized, volunteer groups.

**Current size of membership and community participation:**

The majority of our congregation lives in Middlefield or Durham. The church has some members who do not attend services regularly, but participate in various activities such as Missions, fundraising and community related programs. Prior to the Covid pandemic,our church had approximately 100 active members, with an average attendance at Sunday services of 67.

When Covid forced a shut down of in-person services we began to offer on-line services. During the early months of these on-line services, our analyses indicated that we had approximately 150 viewers each week. We were pleasantly surprised to learn that some of those tuning in were members or former members living out of state and still wanted to be close to our church community. At the present time we estimate that we have 60-100 viewers of our live-stream services. We have hybrid services with 30-45 people attending in-person with that number gradually increasing.

**Languages used in your ministry:** English

**Position Title:** Pastor

**Position Duration:** Settled

**Compensation Level:** ¾ Time - 10 month annual contract at 3/4 time (July and August off) plus 4 week paid leave as mutually agreed upon.

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

**1b. SCOPE OF WORK**

**Preparation and leadership of Sunday worship** including scripture study, crafting of liturgy and developing a bulletin (assisted by an administrative assistant), sermon preparation, guiding and planning of music in coordination with musical staff or volunteers, preaching, offering of prayers, etc. **Faith formation and vitality** through prayer, Bible study, service, identifying helpful resources and opportunities and helping lay persons take advantage of them.

**Leadership development** by working with people in the church to create ministry and programs.

**Provide pastoral care** in collaboration with lay members with an emphasis on those who are sick, elderly, or grieving.

**Community engagement** and leading the way for the church to be an ambassador of God’s love. Continuing to build partnerships in the community to strengthen our spiritual outreach.

**Officiate at weddings, funerals, baptisms and confirmations** for congregation membership.

**Strategic planning** for current and future directions in ministry.

**Participate in wider church activities** such as conference and association meetings as time permits.

**Be involved in stewardship efforts** and financial development.

**Utilize professional development** to hone skills and lead by example.

**Energize and deepen** the spiritual connections and faith understandings of others in all they do.

**Core Competencies:**

1. Community Engagement:
  - A. Ability to interact and participate within the Durham community (ex. Town, school events, and Durham Fair)
  - B. Ability to interact/participate with other local churches in the community.
  
2. An “eye to the future”/ futuristic thinking:
  - A. Ability to help us to look at the bigger picture of where we want to be in 5-10 years.
  - B. Ability to streamline the work of our committees
  - C. Ability to provide transformational leadership
  
3. Pastoral Care/Compassionate Ministry:
  - A. Ability to focus on the spiritual health of the congregation
  - B. Ability to address the needs for Home Visitation Teams, Christian Education, faith formation and development of fellowship opportunities
  - C. Ability to effectively communicate God’s grace to congregation and community.

**1c: COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT**

Salary & Benefit Package - \$73,000

10-month annual contract at 3/4 time (July and August off) plus 4 weeks paid leave as mutually agreed upon)

Benefits include:

Professional development time and support per UCC guidelines.

Ample personal time off will be provided throughout the year.

Sick time as specified by UCC guidelines.

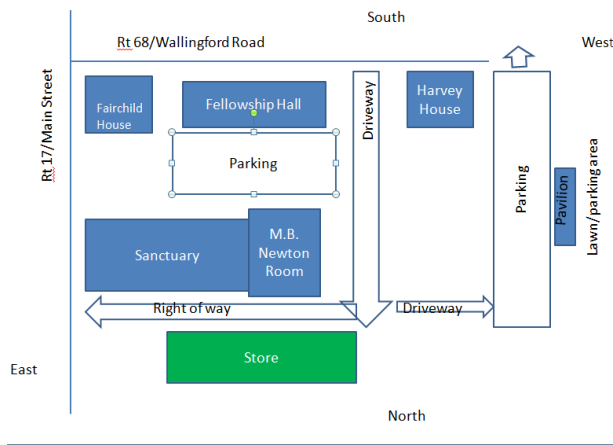
Health insurance available.

Flexible housing allowance or on campus housing- see below.

Life insurance as specified by UCC guidelines.

Retirement annuity.

We have a comfortable three-bedroom house (Harvey House) next door to the church campus that would be available. It’s right in the center of town near the schools, town library, and a small market. We have a separate private minister’s office and meeting rooms in a historical building (Fairchild House) near the church sanctuary and another building for larger meetings (Fellowship Hall). The Pastor would not be expected to hold any meetings in his/her own home. The use of the Harvey House as a residence is negotiable.



**Comment on the residential/commuting expectations for your next minister.**

We have not set up conditions regarding on campus residence, or living in the local area. Use of the Harvey House in lieu of a housing allowance is negotiable.

**State any incentives:** Any additional incentives not listed will be negotiable.

**Describe peer and professional support available for ministers in your association/conference.**

Both conferences provide a wealth of resources and expertise. We encourage our settled minister to use these resources.

**If applicable, describe how your church will adopt part-time adjustments in the pastoral schedule to support a minister’s bi-vocational employment:**

In the past, we have arranged for our 3/4 time settled pastor to have two months off in the summer, one month is vacation time and the other is compensation time, plus school vacations during the academic year if needed. There is a trained team of lay speakers who can fill the pulpit and do so regularly during our summer preaching series. While we can be flexible, we’ve expected our Pastor to serve full-time during the year and have provided two weeks sick time and two weeks for professional development.

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

**Describe the ministry goals you envision your next minister co-collaborating with the congregation to achieve.**

**1st Area: Mark 3- Building Transformational Leadership Skills.**

To us, building transformational leadership skills is the key to building the future of God’s church. As we look to a vibrant future with a new settled pastor, we strive to find a leader who shares United Church’s intense interest in responding to society’s accelerating pace of change.

Our congregation already has strong pockets of enthusiasm and energy. We would very much welcome a pastor who would support and direct this enthusiasm and creatively plant new ideas to help us grow as a church.

Lay leaders have been invaluable as our church weathered challenging times following the sudden death of our minister. Lay leaders and visiting clergy have been essential in filling the pulpit in recent years.

Continuing educational opportunities and lifelong learning for both our new pastor and members of our congregation will result in a core group of diversified leaders in our Church.

Administratively, we welcome pastoral assistance and guidance in deciding the most productive use of time and energy for tending to the needs of those in our church and community, as well as in contributing to missions outreach.

### **2nd Area: Mark 4- Engaging Sacred Stories And Traditions**

Bringing to life engaging sacred stories and church traditions through both motivational preaching and inspirational spiritual care will be key to sparking faith formation across the generations...in seniors, adults, teens and children.

We are a mature enough congregation to value long standing traditions, but also to develop new traditions. We appreciate preachers who can make the Bible come alive and connect biblical stories to the world we live in.

We look to our settled pastor to work with us as we aspire to reach out and serve as a model of God's Love in our community – attracting friends and neighbors, young and old to help our Church thrive and serve others. We heartily welcome the unique gifts and perspectives a new pastor can share.

Pre-COVID, we had a strong church school and active youth programs. We would love to revive programs like these. Our church family has always been multi-generational.

### **3rd Area: Mark 7- Working Together for Justice and Mercy.**

The United Churches of Durham is looking for a dynamic presence in the pulpit who will help us better understand the injustices in our community and the larger population. We want to welcome all to join us as we reach out from our town to the world. We recognize that our church and our community have little diversity. We would encourage our new minister to help us resolve any potential biases which may exist in order to build strong relationships with mutual trust.

We encompass members of two major denominations, thus have never closely aligned with either one or the other, and the affiliations of our clergy have changed over time. This would account for our relative flexibility regarding doctrine...we tend to be "United" as main-line Protestants, yet have many members from different backgrounds and Churches. We strive to be open: have held seders, talks about Islam, Buddhism and other Churches. Our members simply enjoy being with others who strive to be spiritual and cooperate and engage in missions. We find joint purpose in outreach with our brothers and sisters in the Church in a way that is so much more fulfilling than pursuit of an individual path. We look to our new Pastor for help in becoming more intentional in our work.

### **Fourth Area: Mark 8- Strengthening Inter-and Intra Personal Assets.**

We want our new minister to help us to grow in faith individually and as a congregation. We seek a person with strong interpersonal and communication skills who will commit to being open and

transparent with our congregation. Further, we need a minister who will listen to and collaborate with us in making decisions and solving problems. A good sense of humor is essential! Our church needs to be a bedrock of compassion, morality, integrity, and respect for one another. We will support our new minister's own needs for self care and time for spiritual growth.

**Describe how your vision of the minister you are seeking will assist the congregation in making an impact beyond its walls.**

Answered in 3rd Area Mark 7 above.

**Specify language requirements or culturally-specific capacities preferred in a next ministerial leader, and why those matter to the Congregation's sense of calling.**

Not relevant at this time.

**Based on what you have learned about who your church's Neighbor is, and who God is calling the church to become, describe four areas of excellence from *The Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry* that your next minister will display to further equip the congregation's ministry in these areas.**

Reference 1d Ministry Goals

## **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?**

**Mission Statement:** Our congregation believes all people are of sacred worth, created in the image of God. We affirm God's grace is available to all. We are in ministry with everyone. Our church welcomes everyone to worship, praise, pray, connect, and learn.

We are called to share the love and forgiveness of Christ; to welcome, accept, and serve all people. We seek to heal the brokenhearted, to offer grace, and bring Christ's light into the world. We welcome the stranger, serve our neighbor and share the light of Christ.

Also, the members of the United Churches of Durham share together in the fellowship of Jesus Christ as one spiritual community. We are united in worship, mission, ministry, prayer and praise.

We believe that The Church of Jesus Christ is not a building, it is not even a denomination. The Church of Jesus Christ is people. It is a living, breathing body, called together by the spirit and united in faith and in God's people.

During the last two decades, the United Churches of Durham, and many churches in our country, have been experiencing a significant drop in church membership. With decreasing membership comes financial pressure and a greater reliance on fundraising. During the winter of 2019-20, the United Churches conducted a Visioning Process to understand what the congregation identified as the priorities that needed to be addressed.

A Vision Committee was formed and met regularly with focus groups to collect and compile the voices of our congregation and cast a clear mission (what we will do) and vision (how we will live the mission).

Seven meetings were held with 57 attendees. Eight individual conversations occurred with a total of 65 participants, 44 women/21men. The same three questions were asked at all three meetings;

1. What is hard about our church/Where are we stuck?
2. What is good about our church/How are we bearing fruit?
3. What does God hope for our church/What are we called to become?

The committee discerned the collective themes raised by the participants which included: Evangelism, (attract new members) Hospitality, (be more welcoming) Worship, (is the style current) Faith Development, Mission & Service, (Outreach) and the Structural Organization (finances and facilities.)

**Our vision priorities include:**

1. Create a place of welcome with acceptance of all people.
2. Be attractive to newcomers with updated physical spaces, our worship service, and our programming.
3. Worship: Commit more resources and support to music and worship to increase a diversity of style.
4. Faith Development: Commit resources to children and families to meet the needs of families with children and newcomers rather than doing what we have always done.
5. Structural Organization:  
Update physical spaces and examine their current uses.
6. Mission/Service:  
Continue and expand internal congregational care.  
Continue and expand external hands-on missions.
7. Focus service on identified groups:  
special needs, recovery/addiction, families/children/senior concerns
8. Cultivate a culture of generosity, stewardship all year long  
with focused fundraising/mission projects.
9. Faith/Worship/Evangelism:  
Continue collaborations with area churches and joint ministry efforts.  
Cultivate a deeper understanding of our denominational ties  
and beliefs.
10. Faith development:  
Deeper understanding of societal issues such as the LGBTQ+ community and racism and how we interpret their issues through the lens of our faith.

We also need to align our existing buildings, staff, community, budget and internal structures to meet our needs, mission, and financial means (How can we repurpose existing spaces? Reduce the amount of “storage spaces” and/or reduce ownership of properties?)

The Vision process was unfortunately derailed as a result of Covid. Our hope is that the Settled Pastor will help the congregation renew our discussion about our vision for the future, solidify the priorities and create an action plan for implementation.

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

Our historical church is a landmark in the heart of Durham. We want to become its vital, beating heart that reaches out, circulates, and interacts with our communities and their needs, as well as providing an



inner core of strength and comfort. We want to be a welcoming place with open doors for people from all walks of life, young and old, and those many different faith journeys, all seeking to know God's presence.

In the past two years, we faced the double challenges of the need for COVID protocols and our pastor's family emergency leave due to unexpected family illness.

We are a resilient congregation, and many individuals and groups stepped up to serve. Within days, there was a list of lay leaders who led the services and gave the sermons, and a Worship Team who met people at the door, collected contact information, and explained our safety procedures. We have tried many approaches to reach people when services could not be in person. Changes and additions were made as needed and listed on our web page. Currently, we are live-streaming and recording our hybrid services on FaceBook so that people can choose to attend in person or view anytime. We receive many "likes" and comments on social media from people who are excited to be able to connect with us from their homes.

We understand the need to have a multi-year vision statement and a strategic plan. We were working on those prior to the pandemic. We held seven focus group discussions with different groups of members on understanding both our strengths and our challenges, as well as planning our goals for the future. This is an ongoing process.

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

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

##### **BELIEFS & COMMITMENTS**

The statement "Welcome to the family of the United Churches of Durham" certainly demonstrates our strongest commitment, and that is to our fellow Christians, neighbors and friends in the Church and community.

Our "blend" of UCC (Congregational) and UMC (Methodist) since 1941 has resulted in today's flexible approach to "doctrine," allowing ample room for our settled pastors to experiment and try progressive, new ideas.

##### **How is God most often described in worship liturgy?**

God is most often described in our worship liturgy through stories. Our congregants relate well to stories that are creatively interpreted from the Scriptures and then applied to our everyday lives. Historical traditions often weave their way through our worship and seem to provide a sense of grounding, especially for our senior members, even as we experiment with new customs.

##### **In what ways would you describe the Holy Spirit in your midst?**

The Holy Spirit in our midst is a "cheerful energy" that seems to inspire our members to step forward into new roles and responsibilities when the need presents itself. It is also the sense of fun and enjoyment our Church family experiences when we worship and work with each other.

##### **Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.**

LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE – 201

The congregation of the United Churches of Durham is a unique family. We have forged strong and long lasting bonds within our own congregation as well as with the community of Durham. We share our joys exponentially with each other. When there is a baptism and we promise to protect and teach and nurture, we are moved to do so both congregationally and personally. During worship, when a member shares a joy or sorrow, it is felt throughout the congregation. We are a close church. We have an “all hands on deck’ approach to handling situations when they arise. This approach of working together has fostered a trusting nature enabling our members to branch out in multiple directions to help both the church and the community.

We have a robust Missions group which focuses on helping the local community of Durham and the global community as well. The WSCS (Women’s Society of Christian Service) group keeps our church family fed with generational recipes and also conducts functions which help fund church programs. In keeping with the idea of cheerful energy, we have a VERY strong volunteer spirit. If something needs fixing or painting or attention in any way, it is never an issue to find someone to pitch in and help ‘fix’ the problem.

**Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.**

People begin arriving for our Sunday services about an hour ahead of time to prepare the sanctuary, to set up for the coffee hour, and to allow time for the choir to rehearse the music. We stop and chat, wish each other well, and learn and share the news from the other members of our Church family.

When our lecturer announces “This is the day that the Lord has made,” and the congregation replies, “Let us rejoice and be glad in it,” everyone quiets down and listens to announcements. Then our music director plays a prelude and we settle into the quiet concentration of worship. We take time for Prayers of the People. Members offer spoken personal prayers and when they conclude say, “This is my prayer” to which the congregation responds, “This is OUR prayer.”

A Children’s Moment follows where young children come forward to participate. Then, lecturers from the congregation read the Scripture Lesson and then the pastor gives the sermon, or Message. The best sermons are those that make us think, inspire us to act, and become closer to the Holy Spirit. We love the music: The hymns, our traditional organ, and occasionally a special instrumental offering. Our loyal choir has ten regular members, with more people joining during holiday seasons. After the service, we head over to coffee hour to share fellowship with one another for an hour or so.

Baptisms are fun! We love to welcome the little children and their families. And if a child fusses, we smile and say that we have all been there with our own kids. Baptisms can be very moving when the person being baptized is a teenager or an older adult.

A portion of our worship takes place outside our sanctuary within the committees and groups working on various projects.

“For where two or three are gathered together in My name....”

The Missions committee might be doing a Crop Walk or a tag sale, the choir might be going to sing at a nursing home, WSCS might be hosting a pie sale or a Christmas Bazaar.

Our whole Church membership, and many people from our community participate in our major fund-raiser, the Durham Agricultural Fair- which is held at the end of September. That week, our Sunday Worship Service is held on the grounds of the fair with bales of hay for seats, fair food for communion, musical accompaniment. This service is open to all people on the fairgrounds.

**Describe the educational program/faith formation vision of your church.**

Prior to CoVid, Sunday School typically begins in worship where the children observe call to worship, passing the peace, prayers, songs, and childrens' sermon. Then the students head to their classrooms and use crafts, storytelling, science, missions, baking, and drama activities to engage with each week's scripture lesson. Our lessons came from the Deep Blue Connects curriculum: One Room Sunday School. Children remain in worship to witness and participate in the sacrament of Holy Communion the first Sundays of the month. We follow the Regional District 13 School Calendar and skip Sunday School on holiday weekends or school vacations. In our sanctuary, we have a place that children can gather during the service. We believe children are important to our church's vision and future.

Confirmation Class: Most students interested in confirming and affirming their baptismal promises are in 7th-10th grade. Students delve into what it means to be a teen of faith and an engaged member of the Church, exploring both United Methodist and United Church of Christ polity and theology. In the past classes have been offered in the Spring in conjunction with Middlefield Federated Church using the "Confirm not Conform" curriculum.

United Churches adheres to Safe Conduct or Safe Sanctuary practices to ensure the safety of our children, youth and vulnerable adults. We follow a two unrelated adults policy for all Sunday School programming. All volunteers, employees and church leadership complete background checks and are trained in Safe Conduct practices. Copies of our Safe Conduct policy are available in the church office and the Narthex.

**Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.**

**A. When it comes to decision-making, how many hours are spent in meetings per month?**

The minister usually attends three or four Board/Committee meetings a month, which typically run 1.5 hrs. This may include Church Council, Board of Trustees, Board of Deacons, and Board of Christian Education. Meeting times vary from before or after Church to weeknights. We are willing to be flexible with scheduling committee meetings to make efficient use of the minister's time. We believe that the pastor's positive networking contributes to communication, synergy and growth between these groups.

**B. Think of a time when action had to be taken quickly, for example when a crisis or disaster occurred. How was that accomplished?**

A good example of quick action was the Ad Hoc committee that was put together to guide the church through the unexpected death of our minister. This committee worked with boards, committees, lawyers and the congregation to keep everything running as smoothly as possible during a very difficult time. They attempted to be as transparent as possible, but there was still some unease in the congregation. Several open meetings where questions could be asked were held to counter that. It

was a tough situation, but we rallied and responded quickly to ensure the smooth operation of the church and support for the congregation.



Another example has been our Covid Response. We quickly established a Worship Team that directed logistics and guided parishioners. We also committed to deep cleaning the sanctuary and improving air ventilation. We started broadcasting services when we had to shut down the sanctuary. At the time, we had a visiting minister who recorded services. Phone trees were initiated so that everyone could stay connected, especially members who were homebound so that they knew what was happening and could stay connected to the church. We eventually started doing

live stream online services so members could participate in services. When we were finally able to return to in-person worship in our sanctuary, we continued (and still continue now) to offer live streaming for those who cannot attend in person. When we resumed live services, we made the decision to switch to prepackaged communion elements.

**C. Can you provide the next minister with a copy of an organization structure, bylaws and/or annual report to further explain the patterns of the church’s activity and governance?**

Yes.

Members are nominated to the boards - Deacons, Trustees and Christian Education by a Nominating Committee and approved by Council and shared with the full congregation at each Annual Meeting. All elected positions have term limits. The Church Council is the ruling body, composed of seven voting members: The Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer and one current representative from each primary board (Deacons, Trustees and Christian Education).

Church Council meetings are open to all members. Church Council can choose to enter into executive session, excusing non-voters. The settled pastor is a member of Church Council, “ex-officio” and does not vote. Eligibility to be a voting member is based upon the By-law Amendment that was passed on May 21, 2017.

**3b. 11-YEAR REPORT**

Church Name: United Church of Durham UCC (Durham, CT) Church Number: 3425

Addresses:

Address1	Address2	City	State	Zip	Zip4	County	Address Type	Address Location
228 Main Street		Durham	CT	06422	2129			
228 Main Street		Durham	CT	06422				Parish

**Membership**

Year	Adult	Child	Total	Transferred In	Transferred Out	Deaths	Other	Net Change	Year End
2001	185	0	185	0	0	0	0	185	185
2002	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2003	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2004	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2005	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2006	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2007	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2008	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2009	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2010	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2011	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2012	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2013	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2014	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2015	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2016	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2017	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2018	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2019	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2020	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2021	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2022	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2023	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195
2024	195	0	195	0	0	0	0	195	195

**Attendance**

Year	Worship	Small Group	Other	Total
2001	185	0	0	185
2002	195	0	0	195
2003	195	0	0	195
2004	195	0	0	195
2005	195	0	0	195
2006	195	0	0	195
2007	195	0	0	195
2008	195	0	0	195
2009	195	0	0	195
2010	195	0	0	195
2011	195	0	0	195
2012	195	0	0	195
2013	195	0	0	195
2014	195	0	0	195
2015	195	0	0	195
2016	195	0	0	195
2017	195	0	0	195
2018	195	0	0	195
2019	195	0	0	195
2020	195	0	0	195
2021	195	0	0	195
2022	195	0	0	195
2023	195	0	0	195
2024	195	0	0	195

**Financial**

Year	Worship	Small Group	Other	Total
2001	185	0	0	185
2002	195	0	0	195
2003	195	0	0	195
2004	195	0	0	195
2005	195	0	0	195
2006	195	0	0	195
2007	195	0	0	195
2008	195	0	0	195
2009	195	0	0	195
2010	195	0	0	195
2011	195	0	0	195
2012	195	0	0	195
2013	195	0	0	195
2014	195	0	0	195
2015	195	0	0	195
2016	195	0	0	195
2017	195	0	0	195
2018	195	0	0	195
2019	195	0	0	195
2020	195	0	0	195
2021	195	0	0	195
2022	195	0	0	195
2023	195	0	0	195
2024	195	0	0	195

**MyChurch Ministerial Support Subreport**

Year	Worship	Small Group	Other	Total
2001	185	0	0	185
2002	195	0	0	195
2003	195	0	0	195
2004	195	0	0	195
2005	195	0	0	195
2006	195	0	0	195
2007	195	0	0	195
2008	195	0	0	195
2009	195	0	0	195
2010	195	0	0	195
2011	195	0	0	195
2012	195	0	0	195
2013	195	0	0	195
2014	195	0	0	195
2015	195	0	0	195
2016	195	0	0	195
2017	195	0	0	195
2018	195	0	0	195
2019	195	0	0	195
2020	195	0	0	195
2021	195	0	0	195
2022	195	0	0	195
2023	195	0	0	195
2024	195	0	0	195

**3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS**

Describe those who participate in your church:

		Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)
Number of active members:	92	
Number of active non-members:	Less than 10	Yes
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	Approx. 92-102	Yes

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	60%	
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	25%	
Less than 5 years:	15%	

Number of total participants by age:

0-11	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	<i>Are these numbers an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
10	8	4	1-3	5	12	18	24	38	Yes

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35: 18-35	15	Yes
Households with minors:	9	Yes
Single adults age 35-65:	12	Yes
Joint households with no minors:	21	Yes
Single adults over 65:	20	Yes

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

We have an economically diverse membership without the real extremes of wealth and poverty. Some families work hard to make ends meet; some struggle and need assistance with food, fuel, and services. Others are comfortable. Our adult educational levels range from university professors with advanced degrees to developmentally disabled people who have special education needs. We also have farmers and naturalists who have extensive knowledge about the land and forests. While some people work in Durham running shops, raising dairy cows, building houses, teaching, or providing other services, most commute to the nearby cities for work. Again, we have diverse occupations from medical professionals, business executives, lawyers, aerospace machinists, supermarket cashiers, artists, etcetera. Many are retired and/or are caregivers. The majority of our members are also actively involved in volunteer work.

**Describe the mix of ethnic heritages in your congregation, and the overall racial make-up.**

Our congregation reflects our surrounding community, which is mostly white. Our diversity is based on age, profession, religious background and Red Sox versus Yankees fan bases. Many of our members

were raised in other churches or synagogues. Those who come to our church from other denominations join in practicing our Churches' traditions (UCC and/or UMC). We tend to be flexible about denominational distinctions. Our backgrounds range from Mayflower descendants to recent arrivals. We believe diversity needs to be respected and we are looking forward to exploring new directions.

**Has your congregation recently had a conversation about welcoming diversity, or do you plan to hold one in the near future.** See Vision Priorities in Section 2

**3d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING**

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	15	Pastor
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>	5	Pastor
Children's Groups or Classes	*12-15	Board of Christian Ed./ Co-chairs (*pre-COVID)
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	100	Pastor/ Board of Deacons
Church-wide Meals	20-30	Boards and committees host a weekly coffee hour
Choirs and Music Groups	13	Music Director
Church-based Bible Study	10-15	Pastor
Communion <i>(served how often?)</i>	30-40	1st Sunday of each month
Community Meals	20-30	Host senior lunches twice per week, monthly breakfast with the boys
Confirmation <i>(number confirmed last year)</i>	2	Pastor
Drama or Dance Program	0	
Funerals <i>(number last year)</i>	4	Pastor & Family
Intergenerational Groups	0	
Outdoor Worship	20-30	Eccumenical Easter Sunrise Service, Lenten Ashes to Go, Eccumenical Sunday worship at Durham Fair; Blessing of the animals.

Prayer or Meditation Groups	0	
Public Advocacy Work	0	
Retreats	0	
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community	16	
Weddings ( <i>number last year</i> )	1	
Worship time slot: 10:00AM	30	Pastor
Worship (time slot: _____)		
Young Adult Groups or Classes	0	
Youth Groups or Classes	n/a	Two Boy Scout Troops and National Ocean Sciences Bowl Team

Additional comments:

**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).** There are none other than our pastor.

**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:** Not applicable.

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

There aren't any previous pastors or retired ministers that are members. But, we call on some who are friends of our church to occasionally run services when our pastor is not available.

Staff Position	Head of Staff?	Compensation (full time, part time, volunteer)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
Interim Pastor Cindy Stasko	n/a	¾ time	Board of Deacons	interim
Judy Schuler Music Director	n/a	PT	Board of Deacons	13 years
Paula Murphy Office Admin.	n/a	PT	Pastor	<1 year



Stacey Cummings, Director of Christian Education	n/a	Stipend	n/a	6 years
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REFLECTION:

**After reviewing the congregational demographics and activities above, what does this information reflect about your congregation’s overall ministry?**

We have been doing a good job of maintaining our services during the Covid crisis. Now, we are ready to expand our ministry especially in outreach to our local and global communities.

**3e. CHURCH FINANCES**

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$95,647
Investment Proceeds	\$22,071
Endowment Draw ( <i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, “drawing down the principal”</i> )	Zero. We do not draw down the principal.
Fundraising Events	We fundraise about 25,000 -30,000 from the Durham Fair
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$1,602
Grants	\$N/A
Rentals of Church Building	\$ 985
Rentals of Church Parsonage	Parsonage Sold. Proceeds in a special fund.
Support from Related Organizations ( <i>e.g. Women’s Group</i> )	\$ -0-WSCS donates generously from their fundraisers most years.
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$-0-
Other (specify): Library parking lot rental	\$3,812. Will stop in 2023.
Other (specify):Harvey House rental	\$24,000
TOTAL	\$153,417

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

243,991

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

33 percent

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

We do not use the 5-for-5 system. Our Missions Committee allocates the money from fundraisers and special donations in the following manner: Locally, we work with the Social Services Coordinator of the Town of Durham to donate funds for families in need, such as fuel assistance, housing, food, and other special needs. We are helping to provide Thanksgiving baskets to needy families and will provide Christmas gifts, anonymously, to at least two dozen people. We share our buildings for community functions, such as the "Accidental Harmony" chorus group and Trout Unlimited.

In our larger community, we support the Amazing Grace Food Pantry, the Saint Vincent dePaul soup kitchen, and the Solnit Center psychiatric hospital for adolescents. We help to provide housing and furniture for refugees and homeless people. For the larger global community, we respond to disasters such as Hurricane Ian. We donate time and money to Crop Walk, Heifer International, and Days for Girls. Recently, we have donated to assistance for Ukraine, and have two specific families of Ukrainian refugees we are helping. Special donations are requested from our generous membership should the needs arise. Anyone can join our Missions Committee, whenever they so choose, to help with an event or to contribute ideas. We have church wide participation in our major fundraisers.

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

Currently not a part of our practice.

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

Total amount of loan debt: \$79,750.

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.** None

**If the church has had capital campaigns in the last ten years, describe:** In 2015 we faced the need to make major repairs to our two rental houses and other properties. Because we needed to make the repairs promptly, instead of having a capital fund drive we borrowed \$118,678. from the UCC Cornerstone Fund. We spent \$74,761. on renovations and a new septic system for the Harvey House (our parsonage). Regular payments for the loan are derived from the rental income and are part of our annual budget at the rate of \$943.75. per month. We spent approximately \$17,265 on renovations to the Methodist owned parsonage with the goal of getting it ready for sale. We sold it this past summer, and netted \$274,221. These proceeds have become the Methodist Legacy Fund. We also spent \$20,621. updating the church office building, \$2,531 on our Fellowship Hall, and \$3,500 paving our large parking lot. The balance of the Cornerstone Fund loan is currently \$78,186. Interest from a separate endowment fund, called the Burr Fund, is used for maintenance of the sanctuary.

**Does your church have an endowment?** Yes. It is separated by denominations. The Methodists have an endowment of \$274,221 from the sale of their parsonage. The First Church Congregational received a special request many years ago that is restricted to repair and maintenance of the church sanctuary building. We draw on income from that fund, but not principal. The principal was \$105,000.00 and the current market value is \$110,692. In addition, the First Church has an investment fund that currently totals approximately \$450,000. We have a special Financial Committee who manage those investments. We use income/dividends, but not principal, to help with our annual budget.

**Describe draw on endowment:**

We do not draw on our endowment for operating expenses. We draw on income but not principle.

**Other Assets**

See endowment paragraph above.

**Does your church have a parsonage?** Yes, currently used as a rental.

17 Wallingford Road, Durham Ct 06422, (on campus)

Finished square footage: 1400

Number of Bedrooms, 3

Number of Bathrooms one and 1/2

Assessed real estate value: \$286,800.

Fair market rental value of the parsonage: \$2,200. per month

Available for minister residence: Yes

Expected minister residence: Available; choice to be made by the new minister.

Condition of structure, systems and appliances -very good, recently renovated.

Entity in the church responsible for review and needed repairs :Trustees

**Describe all buildings owned by the church:**

Church - sanctuary, Marion B. Newton Room (choir practice/meeting room), small kitchen

Fairchild House- offices, meeting space, four meeting rooms.

Fellowship Hall- Social meeting and gathering space, large kitchen, 5 classrooms and storage.

The Harvey House is a one family house on campus which is currently used as a rental.

**Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs?**

All spaces except the pulpit, which could be moved to an accessible place if need be.

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

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

We are a fiscally responsible church and just as we reinvest financially to remain fiscally sound, we invest in our faith to remain spiritually fed.

**How does your church decide on its budget?**

Our church Treasurer prepares a monthly report that is presented at the Trustees' Meeting and then the following week to the Church Council Meeting. This report documents the progress we are making in

fulfilling our financial obligations and where we stand in terms of our annual goals. We discuss which funds are to be used for unexpected expenses and the progress we are making on designated projects.

For our annual budget, we use a narrative budget process. Each board and committee outlines their goals for their programs and expenses in four major areas: Mission, Worship, Learning, and Caring. These areas are compiled into a document which is then presented to the membership of the church by the Stewardship Committee. Pledges are gathered. In the past pre-Covid, this entire process was followed by a special luncheon meeting for the entire congregation.

We have a special Financial Board that manages our investments and endowment funds. There is input from other groups about their fundraising activities. Once we know our resources, a draft budget is compiled by the Church Council. This is presented to the Church membership, again, at our Annual Meeting for discussion and vote. This is a fully transparent process. Sometimes, significant changes are made, such as the decision to take out the Charterhouse Loan for major renovations to the Harvey House (new roof, windows, appliances, etc.) and to repair the church steeple.

Our Annual Meeting is also the time when our Nominating Committee recommends members to fill various positions and others volunteer to fill any vacancies. Our Moderators, Trustees, and Deacons all have term limits in order that many individuals may have the opportunity to participate in these important duties. The result is that the majority of our membership have had extensive experience in the planning and fulfillment of church functions and properties.

### 3f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

**Name one to three significant happenings in the history of your church that have shaped the identity of your congregation. Add the most important event in the life of your church in the past 10 years.**

1. Previous to appointing Jeanette Cooper-Hicks, we had 2 settled pastors who served our church for 24 years each. When Jeanette became our pastor in 2016, she became the first female leader in the over 300 year history of our church.
2. Also for the first time, our pastor was employed on a three quarter, part-time basis: full time from September to June, with one month for vacation, and July and August available only for pastoral emergencies.
3. Developed a missions outreach program which sent up to 75 participants (many of which were young adults from the church AND community) to Kentucky for various building projects. At one point, our connections were so strong, they named a building after our church.

**Describe a change your church has managed in the recent past.**

The changes required by COVID are described in Section 3b.

**Every church has conflict, some minor, some larger. “Where two or three are gathered, there will be disagreement...” Describe your congregation’s values and practices when it comes to conflict.**

The United Churches of Durham is a family and when disagreement arises, as it does in every family, we listen first. We listen to each other and we respect all points of view so that we can work through disagreements without generating divisiveness. To achieve this, we developed a Pastor-Parish Relations committee to both work through conflicts that may arise and to facilitate ongoing communication.

**Ministerial History**

Staff member’s name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Rev. Interim Cindy Stasko	9/1/2021-Present	Yes
The Spring/Summer 2021 Preaching Series Visiting Clergy and Lay Leaders of UCD led services during these 21 weeks.	04/18/2021-9/5/2021	Yes (Visiting Clergy)
Rev. Milton Brasher-Cunningham (Bridge Pastorate)	10/1/2020-01/31/2021	yes
	Contract extended 1 additional month-until 2/28/21.	
Rev. Jeanette Cooper-Hicks	07/1/2016-4/15/2021	Yes ** Dual - 2/2022
	10/1/2020-02/28/2021: Family Medical Leave	
Rev. Stephen Washburn (Interim)	2014-2016	Yes
Dr. Rev. Elven Riggles	1990-2014	Yes
Rev. Robert Fell	1965-1989	Methodist

**Comment on what your church has learned about itself and its relationship with persons who provided ministerial leadership:**

In the past, the minister has been assumed to be *available 24/7* and fully dedicated to the church. To that end, we have worked with recent ministers to develop professional and personal boundaries which include respect for privacy, time and family.

**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, not that we are aware of.

**4. WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?**

4a. COMMUNITY VISION

**How do the relationships and activities of your congregation Extend outward in service and advocacy?**

(Reference: “Many Churches love to tell the story.... below)

**Describe your congregation's participation in meetings, relationships and activities connecting the wider United Church of Christ (association / conference / national setting).**

The United Churches of Durham is active in the Southern New England UCC, the New Haven East Consociation and the New York Annual Conference, CT District.

**Many local churches love to tell the story of what they are doing in the community to transform lives.** (None of the UCC Faith Community Programs apply at this time.)

Historically, the United Churches of Durham has reached out to the community claiming fame for years with its "Baked Bean Suppers." We are also well known for our Christmas Bazaar with its diverse assortment of homemade items and holiday foods. Not to be outdone by the women cooks, the men "put on their aprons" and began hosting a monthly "Breakfast With the Boys". We have in the past provided and served dinner a couple times a year at a nearby Soup Kitchen in Middletown - our largest neighboring city. We organized yearly Mission Trips in the past for about 15 years, sending van-loads of energy-rich teenagers and skilled adults (with tools) to Eastern Kentucky to build and upgrade homes.

Currently a Community Choir, "Accidental Harmony" (ranging in membership from 50-100), practices weekly then performs two concerts per year in our Sanctuary.

We make our facilities available for School activities, two Boy Scout Troops, Community Reunions, senior luncheons, flu and CoVid Vaccination events and a National Ocean Sciences Bowl Team. Prior to COVID, a Before-and-After School Program used the Fellowship Hall, and recently our Church hosted a Witness Stone 'Ceremony and Placement' in commemoration of a noteworthy 18th Century Black American from the community.

Our famous Booth at the Durham Fair not only is a huge revenue generator, but pulls together so many of our Congregants along with their families and friends who get "drafted" into spending four days concocting thousands of Lime Drinks and laughing together! Those who don't work at the Lime Rickey booth can often be found parking cars for the fair event at our churches nearby parking lots. We also host an Ecumenical service on hay bales at the Fair for all who cannot escape their booths and obligations.

We have alternated hosting pre-Thanksgiving services with our neighboring Middlefield Federated Church and celebrated Sunrise Easter Services with them in nearby Lyman Orchards.

Members are involved with the international Days for Girls program with another church in Rocky Hill, Connecticut. Funds are also raised when national and international disasters occur. We have participated with other local churches in the CROP walk and the Walk Against Hunger in Hartford. Our Sunday school children participate in raising donations for Heifer International. Our previous minister started a highly successful weekly "Coffee Clatch" at a local coffee shop, pulling in all sorts of folks and building relationships with those in the community who don't regularly attend church.

Currently, the Durham Senior Center is closed while a new center is being prepared. We have been hosting Senior Center luncheons twice per week in our Fellowship Hall. In addition, we welcomed

medical staff from a Town program to administer Covid boosters and flu shots. Blood drives will begin again after Covid. We are also helping the Town of Durham in preparing Thanksgiving baskets.

We look forward to resuming our pre-covid community activities.

**Reflect on what the above statements mean to your community. Is your congregation interested in working toward any of the above statements of witness in the near future?**

Under the leadership of the newly called minister we would be interested in exploring some of these programs.

**Describe your congregation's participation in ecumenical and Interfaith activities (with other denominations and religious groups, Local and regional)**

Response included in "Many Local Churches" paragraph above..

**If your congregation has a mission statement, how does that mission statement compare to the actual time spent engaging in different activities? Think of the range of activities from time spent gathering, to governance, to time spent going out.**

See Section 2 - Who is God Calling Us To Become

**Reflect on the scope of work assigned to your pastor. How is their Community ministry and their ministry in and on behalf of the wider church accounted for in the congregation's expectations on their time?**

Refer to 1b Scope of Work

#### 4b. MISSION InSite

**Comment on your congregation's MissionInsite report with data for your neighborhood(s) or area. What trends and opportunities are shown?**

The town of Durham has a population of approximately 7,400. The size of the community has remained relatively stable over the past five years. The household number is 2.83 which is larger than the trends for communities in Connecticut with similar demographics. However, as in many small towns in the state, the population of children in the lower grades has decreased to the point that the town has closed one elementary school and may close an additional elementary building. These trends are projected to continue over the next five years.

Durham is not a diverse community. The town is primarily white with Latinos, Blacks and Asians making up five percent of the population. In reviewing the projected data for the town, the number of non-whites will stay about the same. Adjoining towns (Middletown and Meriden) are projected to have significantly greater growth in the aforementioned minorities.

Age- the median age for Durham is 46.0 years. Also the number of seniors in the community will continue to grow as is the case in most small towns in the state.

Seventy-five percent of Durham's households having children contain two married adults, however, the trends indicate that single parent households will increase by 4% over the next five years. About 75 percent of the adults in Durham are currently employed.

Typical of a suburban community, Durham is very supportive of community sports. Little League, youth softball, football, soccer, etc. are well supported. Our high school has a vigorous athletic program and wins their share of conference and state championships. Uniquely, music programs are as popular as athletics among our school children.

There are four churches in town: United Churches - MainLine Protestant, Notre Dame - Catholic, Church of the Epiphany - Episcopalian, and Rock of Refuge - Evangelical.

**How do your congregation's internal demographics compare or contrast to a) the neighborhoods adjacent to your church, and b) other neighborhoods with which your church connects?**

The demographics in our church closely reflect those of our neighborhoods in Durham. However, the one exception is in the general age of the congregation, especially those who are attending services on a regular basis. The age of those who attend are generally 50 plus. On the other hand, the two nearby cities have demographics that are significantly different. Those communities are more diverse in race, age differences, average wealth resources and non-traditional church affiliation.

**How are the demographics of the community currently Shaping ministry, or not?**

See the response to 4b above. Reaching out to the community is a high priority as articulated in the vision statement.

**What do you hear when you talk to community leaders and ask them what your church is known for?**

Our church location, right in the middle of town at a crucial intersection provides a space for high school reunions, vaccinations, blood drives and senior lunches, etc. We are known for being the oldest church in Durham and are closely connected with the history of our community. When asked, our community leaders say our church is best known for its service to the town, for support of community members, and for our delicious Lime Rickeys at the Durham Fair.

**What do new people in the church say when asked what got them involved?**

As mentioned, we are a family at the United Churches of Durham. New members of the church are brought to our doors by current members or they are church shopping. They either became or want to become members because of the welcoming nature of our congregation. Additionally, they want their children exposed to our family warmth and open door policy and they also want their children to participate in Christian Education.

**5. REFERENCES**

REFERENCE 1

Rev. John Clarke, retired minister from a neighboring community who frequently fills pulpit (203) 686-0084 [johnlittleone@att.net](mailto:johnlittleone@att.net)



I once read a book entitled, "Feeding and Leading." The main theme of the book was the way in which people and churches are charged by acts of ministry to feed and lead. Over the course of my forty plus years of ministry I have developed a sense of how congregations measure up to this idea. United Churches of Durham does this feeding and leading very well. They have traveled through many emotions as do most congregations, but uniquely they have journeyed with a remarkable sense of clarity and purpose. From the first time I was asked to fill the pulpit, both my wife and I felt at home. It was like I was expected to be among them. We never felt like strangers. The congregation looked to the future and set about to plan that future owning the ministry themselves and "feeding and Leading," one another along the way. The Lay Ministry in place has willingly taken on leadership positions with enthusiasm as preachers and teachers. The preaching has been shared by young and old and it encompasses a wide range theologically. Filling the pulpit on an occasional basis for the past ten plus years has allowed me to be with the church throughout the seasons of the church year. In all seasons they have striven to be faithful and honest with one another and with themselves. Whoever is "Fed and Led" to be pastor here will be welcomed and embraced and will grow with them and be blessed by them.

Rev. Dr. John W. Clarke

## REFERENCE 2

Laura Francis, former First Selectman and Town Clerk of Durham Ct

(860) 463-2406 [Laurafrancis2007@gmail.com](mailto:Laurafrancis2007@gmail.com)

My name is Laura Francis. I have just retired from the Town of Durham after 30 years of service. I served as Assistant Town Clerk for 5 years, 10 years as the elected Town Clerk and 15 years as the elected First Selectman. During those years I have had the privilege of working very closely with the pastors, staff and lay leadership of the United Churches of Durham.

Even though I am not a congregant, I have always felt welcome and part of the church family. Each of the last two pastors have made it a point to connect with town government to address areas of mutual concern and find ways to give back to the community. Not only was that a priority of the leadership, but I believe it was appreciated by the members, many who also serve in volunteer, appointed or elected capacities in the town. Over the years, the church has generously shared its resources with the townspeople. Some of these examples include, hosting senior lunches, the Accidental Harmony Chorus, numerous scouting activities, food pantry and serving on the Durham Neighbors in Need fund committee and participation in the Memorial Day Parade and more. Many of us will be forever grateful for these contributions.

It is my sincere hope that the next pastor appreciates and builds upon the collaborative and collegial relationship that the church has with the Durham Town Government and the community at large. I wish the selection committee all the best in its important work and send my gratitude for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Blessings for a joyous holiday season.

Laura Francis

Rev. Milton Brasher-Cunningham

(781) 405-3435 [miltybc@aol.com](mailto:miltybc@aol.com)

United Churches of Durham is a tenacious, joyful, and resilient congregation. I served as their Bridge Pastor while their pastor was on medical leave during the pandemic. They did a wonderful job of taking care of each other in the midst of our forced distance. They were supportive and encouraging to me, and to one another. That sense of community is their hallmark.

They also have a deep love for Durham and are a significant presence in the town both in terms of their rich history and their current involvement.

I loved being a part of this congregation.

Milton Brasher-Cunningham

## 6a. CLOSING PRAYER


Holy One, we give you thanks for our beloved United Churches of Durham and the privilege it is to be the community's church. You have charged us to be faithful to this awesome ministry and we trust that your Spirit will guide us as we seek our next settled pastor. Bless us with wisdom, grace and open hearts as we discern your will for our future. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear all the ways you call

us to live out the Good News of mercy and love here in Durham and around the world. Bless all churches and candidates as we journey together during this challenging and hope-filled season of searching and calling. We pray this in the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

**6b. 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 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 a suitable 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? Search Committee Formed

A large, handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed within a rectangular border. The signature is cursive and appears to read "Stacey Cummings".

Stacey Cummings, Chair

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

Staff Comment:

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

Staff Comment:

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

Staff Comment:

*Rev. Sam Houser, Bridge Area Conference Minister, SNE Conference, UCC - February 9, 2023*

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*

**UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**

