

## Interim Pastor | Acton Congregational Church

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### About Acton Congregational Church

Acton Congregational Church is located at 59 H Road, Acton, ME 04001, only a few miles from the New Hampshire border so we enjoy the richness of both beautiful New England states. We are part of the York County Association of the Maine Conference United Church of Christ. The Acton Congregational Church has been providing a spiritual presence and home to many in our community since 1781. We are referred to as the “Light on the Hill”, an apt name both literally and figuratively.

The church started as a summer seasonal church, filling its pulpit with a different guest preacher almost every week. It has had its ups and downs over the decades, and though small, it has always held steadfast and committed to its purpose. It continued to grow into a full-time ministry with a congregational membership of over 100 souls at times. We currently have 97 covenant and associate members and welcome many summer residents who are regular attendees and who continue to support the church. Weekly attendance is usually between 25-40 in the winter months, and almost doubles in the summer. We have been blessed the past 10 years with two part-time pastors, one halftime and the other one-quarter time. Our halftime pastor, the Reverend Doctor Abby Haskell, recently ended her tenure in December of 2022. We have filled the pulpit with supply pastors and our one quarter-time pastor.

We are currently seeking an Interim Pastor and are open to creative solutions and conversations regarding this position being halftime to three-quarter time.

### About the Congregation – Who We Are

We love our church. The minute you walk through the doors, you are met with warmth and know you are welcome as you are. The souls who comprise the congregation are from diverse backgrounds, diverse in faith, life experiences, and income levels. Whether a member or a regular or seasonal attendee, all freely give of their diverse talents and treasures. There has never been a need that has not been met. God’s power and presence often amaze us. This is a truly prayerful church. We pray often and openly and have stood witness, many times over, to the power of prayer.

We are blessed with strong lay leadership and like to engage as many as possible in the life of the church. Our local UCC governance and lay person involvement are important to us and it informs how we work with our pastors. We have historically been, and continue to be, an informal church, with a “less meetings, more action” mentality. And we have a healthy sense of humor that often keeps us going.

Our inherent creativity and inventiveness in solving challenges that face us, served us well during the worst of the Covid pandemic. We never missed a service, quickly switching to the use of technology and our brave pastors preached in the parking lot to cars full of members even in below zero-degree temperatures (horn honking became the means of collective response). We continue to be blessed with a very talented technology leader and we are committed to continuing the online ministry that

was started during the pandemic. It has been a blessing to our aging members, snow birds, and the sick who cannot attend in person.

## **Our Vision for the Interim Pastor Role**

We understand the overall role of an Interim Pastor. We have thought and prayed about what we most need to accomplish in the next 12-18 months to be ready to search and call a settled pastor. While we are open to this list being challenged, modified, or added to, as an Interim Pastor gets to know us better, we feel the following three areas need specific attention prior to calling the settled pastor.

### **1. Provide Guidance and Mediation through the Search and Call Process**

In order to be able to determine the best next pastor for our church, we feel we need to get ourselves better organized and focused. We want the Interim Pastor to lead us through a visioning process, creating our church's Vision Board – we need to be able to define our vision for the future and use that to help us and any potential settled pastoral candidate determine best fit. We need guidance and leadership in engaging the congregation in this and creating our church profile. As we have many dear snowbirds, folks attending only online, as well as the hearty year-round folks, we want to make sure all voices are heard and considered. Additionally, as part of getting ourselves “organized”, we need assistance creating a new or revised governance structure and associated by-laws. We started this work prior to our pastor's departure, but given the new needs of the church and what may come during the visioning process, we feel we need to take a step back and take another look as we move forward. We would like to accomplish this prior to engaging a settled pastor.

### **2. Lay Ministries and the Positive Use of Small Groups**

As mentioned prior, we are blessed with a core group of strong lay leaders with diverse skills. We need assistance on how best to utilize laity and create and nurture small groups to promote growth, engage members, and create a healthy church community. Church groups need the right structure, purpose, leadership, and church support so they do not become a negative force. Given our historic informality, we have had occasional ad hoc groups come into being, usually built on an individual's passion and willingness to “run with it”. This has worked to a certain extent and filled some needs the pastors did not have the capacity to support. However, these activities and groups have not always been formalized or supported through church structure, financial support, and recognition. This has lessened their on-going sustainability. We would like to embrace the power of lay ministries and the use of small groups, but doing it in a more structured manner to be able build sustainability. That structure and how it would work in conjunction with our pastors, lay leaders, and governance committees is where we need assistance. A key outcome would be more members engaged and supported by the church community. We hope that this would also attract others to our church. We would like to see lay ministries, using trained lay members, launched in such areas as outreach, bible study, visitation, and social.

### **3. “Keep Them Coming Back”**

There is always the danger of losing members whenever there is a transition. To a certain extent, that is inevitable. However, during this period of transition, we want assistance keeping the energy high, keeping the congregation engaged and making sure the “Light on the Hill” remains a welcoming beacon. We believe an interim needs to bring that passion and energy through his/her preaching and commitment to the congregation's well-being. We want to thrive, even during transition.

## About you – Our Attribute Wish List

- We looked at our list of desired attributes for our Interim Pastor and said, “Oh, the Interim has to be perfect!” We did laugh. Our sense of humor does come out often, so should yours. Smiles matter.
- You should be an engaging preacher. We acknowledge that you have a hard act to follow, and we know you will have your own style. The key is engaging the congregation, balancing knowledge of religion and biblical intellect with how we understand it and relate to it and use it today.
- You should have good mediator skills, not afraid to deal with conflict if the need arises, as we do our visioning and small group work. You are able to create and foster a safe environment for people to share their thoughts and opinions openly.
- Not only do you have great listening skills, you listen and you hear.
- You are comfortable with pastoral care including praying with others and visiting those who need and request it.
- You are caring, compassionate.
- You are motivational, inspiring us to action. We want a positive influence and a push to move forward in a prayerful, thoughtful way to create more abundance and continue to thrive.
- You are approachable, easy to talk with.
- You are creative and open to suggestions and new ideas in worship, organization, and accomplishing the work of the church.

## Reporting Relationship

This position reports to the Church Council. This position will be reviewed at least annually by the Pastor Parish Relations Committee and the Council. Interim Pastor should be prepared to would work with the other pastor if there is one, the Director of Music, the Director of Digital Ministry, office staff, committees and lay leaders.

## Responsibilities

- Preaching (may be shared if there is a quarter-time pastor)
- Visitation
- Attending committee meetings as needed or requested
- Holding staff meetings
- Guiding the work listed above
- Funerals, baptisms, and weddings as needed
- Other – to be discussed

## Requirements & commitments

- This position is half to three-quarter time with a time commitment of approximately 20-30 hours per week, however there may be certain times of the year when a heavier time commitment is required.
- This position is salaried, with benefits. Our current targeted budget is \$40,000 including all benefits; however, this may flex depending on final agreed to time commitments and responsibilities.
- Live within easy commuting distance to Acton

## Candidate requirements

- Fully ordained UCC pastor or ordained in another recognized denomination, willing to commit to dual standing.
- Experience as a pastor and/or interim in small or mid-sized church(s) preferable, or able to demonstrate willingness and ability to adapt to small church life.
- Demonstrate excellent communication skills, both verbal and written.
- Strong preaching skills.
- Energetic and committed to interim work.
- Must meet all UCC requirements.
- Must pass background check.