

First Congregational Church of Paxton
Designated Term Minister (DTM)

Church Contact Information

First Congregational Church of Paxton

1 Church Street Paxton, Massachusetts 01612

1-508-756-2818

<http://www.paxtonucc.org>

Additional Denominational Affiliations: UCC Conference: Southern New England

Association: Area Conference Minister Name: Rev. Carol Steinbrecher

ACM email: steinbrecher@sneucc.org

ACM phone: 508-244-4887

1. Describe the ministry position for which you are seeking a Minister. (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)

The First Congregational Church of Paxton is seeking an energetic Designated Term Minister for a three-year period to help guide us forward as we continue our faith journey during this time and explore our future options. The Designated Term Minister's primary mission is to help the First Congregational Church of Paxton heal, reconnect, and revitalize. This requires that the Designated Term Minister will, through his/her or their biblical preaching, Ministerial care, counseling and interactions with the church leadership, help build its members through this period. This individual will help support the congregation so that it can continue to identify its mission and purpose as the body of Christ. In addition, he/she or they will help prepare the congregation and leadership to move into our future.

The full-time position of Designated Term Minister requires flexibility in the working hours, including evenings and weekends. This individual needs to be available in emergency situations, as it is a fulltime position.

We are a joyful community committed to being a welcoming church. Our doors are open to all. Several years ago our congregation took a vote to joyfully allow same-sex weddings, and that vote was overwhelmingly in favor. Our coffee hour is a great time to meet visitors to our church. We maintained a strong presence in the community throughout the pandemic as we transitioned from a remote Worship to now offering an

in-person worship with a livestreaming addition. We successfully established new community outreach during the pandemic as we began, and continue to maintain, an active food pantry. The pandemic has challenged our church with limitations on gatherings, but the congregation is stepping up to these challenges as we face an unknown future, and we are also receiving assistance from the Bridge Minister.

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

We are looking for our Designated Term Minister to focus and help us build on our Connections, Mission, and Future of FCCP. COVID has impacted everyone, especially our family memberships. We are looking for support and guidance reconnecting with our current membership and building our membership. The Designated Term Minister will need to partner with the Director of Faith Formation to build out programs and reengage and energize our youth. As we reconnect and build our membership we want to build on our outreach to the community; COVID had a positive impact in this area and we want to continue to capitalize on this.

The Designated Term Minister is expected to lead all worship services and perform all other duties specified below when not on vacation or away for other approved reasons. When the Designated Term Minister cannot be available, he /she/they must work with the diaconate to make arrangements for on call coverage and communicate this to the appropriate staff and committee members. The DTM will also manage the staff to assist in reaching the competencies. In addition to this paragraph specific targeted areas should focus on:

- *Ability to collaborate with a dedicated staff and lay leadership*
- *Ability to identify and facilitate relationships with new community partners*
- *Excellent communication skills and a willingness to learn new technology to increase effectiveness of livestreaming and media presence*

3. Position Scope: *Fulltime*

4. Position Duration: *3 years with an annual review process*

5. Is the DTP eligible for the settled position? *Yes*

- a. *If so how discerned? Upon a mutual agreement of both parties the candidates name will be brought to the congregation for approval as the settled Minister. If a mutual agreement is not in place, a full search process will convene.*

Designated Term Ministry Goals

1. Please choose all of the reasons a DTM that applies to you

- a. ☒ New ministry development, start or continuance

- b. ☒ Revitalization of current ministries and church vitality
 - c. ☐ Legacy/Hospice
 - d. ☐ Reassessment of ministry, which may include
 - i. Exploring merger, yoking or unification with another church
 - ii. Assessment of properties
 - iii. Staffing restructuring
 - e. ☐ Major conflict/healing
2. In a paragraph or two, explain how you discerned that a DTM was right for the church at this time.

FCCP had a settled Minister for 5.5 years. Prior to that it was the job of a 3-year interim Minister to bring FCCP up to speed concerning governance, procedures, protocols, and creating a relationship with the Conference. As a change agent, he worked to turn FCCP into a strong, vibrant church, with a very efficient Council. Over that time, we wrote bylaws, a safe church policy and completed revitalized systems that were not in place under the Minister who served this church for 44 years.

Currently we have a bridge Minister who will serve for more than year. FCCP does not require the specific skill sets and trainings of an interim Minister, as that work has been recently done. In reviewing the options, the Council, in consultation with Conference leadership have determined that a DTM is the most appropriate option and they would be able to help and support our congregation in achieving our goals. We have also determined that if our relationship with the DTM is the right fit, that he/she or they could be eligible for the settled Minister position.

3. Please explain your goals for this Designated period using the table below.

	Goal: with specificity, describe what you hope to accomplish during this time	Commitment: describe how the congregation will prioritize in reaching this goal?	Assessment: describe how the congregation will know the goal has been accomplished
1.	The DTM will work with the Council to increase participation in worship by potentially bringing back members to church on Sunday and to grow the church in membership by reaching out to and making an effort to connect with the	Covid-19 has affected the world and FCCP is no different. We have a solid membership base, but with safety protocols in place and people's insecurity or reaction to personal health concerns, our weekly attendance has dropped. During this time our outreach has changed from	An uptick in weekly attendance and adding new members into our church family and restoring some of our past successes, for example a robust

	<p>local community. That increase in participation would also include growing our Sunday School Program and youth group offerings. Our connections should include an improved social media presence including, updates to the website and effective livestreaming of our services.</p>	<p>what it was and we need to broaden our relationship with our local community. We have been working on the church's digital footprint, but the input from a person more accustomed to current technology will help the efforts.</p>	<p>Christian Education Program.</p>
2.	<p>To increase our mission efforts both in the church and beyond the walls of the church. Again, the pandemic has changed how we have done business. During the pandemic we began a 24/7 food pantry, which has been successful. Pledging and funding has been impacted and that has forced us to lose momentum in this area. Recently we have returned to some of our previous ministries, for example our commitment to Dismas House, which is a working farm for men who have been released from prison. We, as a church, commit to providing dinner on a regular monthly schedule.</p>	<p>FCCP has a significant effort in the area of mission and outreach. Our youth group has been involved in ongoing projects in Worcester and Cambridge to address the issue of homelessness. Our youth has also been involved with projects with Mustard Seed, also in Worcester. We have a commitment to Dismas House, a home for released inmates where we serve meals on a monthly basis. Our Sunday School has been involved in a 5k and dog treat sales for a local animal project. Prior to the pandemic, adults and youth went to Puerto Rico and Houston on a church-sponsored mission trip to provide relief after the hurricanes.</p>	<p>Increase in youth group activity in the area of mission and outreach, as well as providing a larger scale mission project for our church. Meeting this goal would also be evident by seeing an increase in outreach projects in which the congregation can be involved.</p>
3.	<p>The last goal is to develop strategies to increase church giving and that would include pledge and non-pledge income. Our hope is that achieving our first goal</p>	<p>We have a gifted staff and want to make sure that they are paid an appropriate salary for their dedication and efforts. Parts of our church are over 250 years old and the cost to maintain the</p>	<p>Additional pledge units and totals. Potential new fund raisers or grants to support specific causes and missions.</p>

	<p>would move this goal along. We are also looking to identify additional streams of revenue. Several years ago we brought a day care center into our church building and this has resulted in a steady stream. We would look to identify other ideas for revenue to support both the local budget, as well as our mission budget. Ideas could include grants, additional consistent building use commitments, and fund raisers.</p>	<p>building is more challenging every year. As noted above, our financial commitment, although still significant, has decreased in these tougher times. Our goal is to not only get back to where we were, but surpass our previous commitments.</p>	<p>New relationships with organizations that would like to call FCCP their home.</p>
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Who We Are

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

1. Church's Mission Statement:

We are a joyful community committed to being a welcoming church. We maintain a strong presence in the community as the home for Protestant worship in Paxton and surrounding communities. We have supported this mission throughout the pandemic and now offer a hybrid of virtual and in-person Worship. We look to the future and to continuing to expand our church and its mission.

2. Brief Church History:

In the beginning, on the town warrant of February 25, 1765 was an item to establish a church in Paxton. Following the town meeting, on April 1st of that year, approval for building a Meetinghouse was voted. In 1894 The First Parish Church of Paxton was disbanded and the church was incorporated as the First Congregational Church of Paxton. Major additions and renovations were made in 1957 and 1988, including a chair lift to facilitate handicapped accessibility. First Congregational Church has been here for over 250 years and continue to be a vibrant church that serves our church and local community. Prior to the pandemic we enjoyed a robust Sunday School Program and youth choir.

In 2013 a husband-and-wife Ministerial team retired after a tenure of just over 40 years. Under their leadership FCC Paxton underwent substantial growth, developing

a very strong foundation for our now thriving congregation. Upon their departure an Interim Minister was hired for the next 3 years. A major change which occurred under his direction, was the creation of a church council form of government resulting in a greater degree of lay leadership.

Our most recent minister served since being called in 2016. She was the first female to occupy this position, and served until her resignation in January of 2022. Since her departure we have been shepherded by an incredible Bridge Minister and our church remains strong and focused in a post-pandemic world.

Our Bridge Pastor has worked effectively with the church leadership and we have seen growth in a number of areas. Our goal is to move to the future, and this includes a major capital plan to install a vertical lift to provide easier access to the church for members and guests.

3. 2-3 Significant Events:

- *First female minister for past 5 ½ years. A transition from a previous 40-year ministry, in addition to the 3-year rebuilding of our church's governance structure under the direction of the interim minister.*
- *Addition of 24/7 Food Pantry to support area families during COVID and continuing forward with this ministry*
- *Addition of independently run preschool to support area families with child care and provide income to the church*
- *The work completed by a previous interim pastor had helped to create an infrastructure for governance and growth*
- *In the past 4 years our church has supported 2 significant Youth Mission trips*

4. Church Strengths:

- *Large core of committed members that range from many long-term individuals to those who have fairly recently join our congregation.*
- *Consistent and substantial support of mission and outreach programs. This has included youth group projects in Worcester and Cambridge. It has also included local ministries, such as, Dismas House. The church has also supported large mission trips to Puerto Rico and Houston after the hurricanes.*
- *Powerful worship services, organized by a dedicated Diaconate, and the spoken word is enhanced with music provided by an outstanding choir.*
- *Self-Governing council who has pivoted beautifully through the pandemic.*
- *A solid financial foundation, including several trusts.*

- *Our staff, is dedicated and very capable. The staff includes a Minister, Director of Faith Formation, a Choir Director, an Organist, an Administrative Assistant, and a Sexton.*

5. Church Challenges:

- *Increasing Church attendance and involvement*
- *Increasing Pledge income*
- *Increasing Fellowship opportunities outside our church walls*
- *Increasing In-person programming*
- *Bringing back a previously strong Sunday School and youth ministry program*
- *Re-energizing our Church in all areas to greater than the current levels*
- *Designing and providing for a digital footprint to increase both online and in-person participation in worship, Christian education, and missions*

6. Experience of Conflict:

1. Every church has conflict, some minor, some major, some larger. On a scale of 1-5 where would you rank your church's level of conflict? C
 - a. Problem to solve
 - b. Disagreement
 - c. Contest
 - d. Fight or Flight
 - e. Intractable
2. Explain why you chose this level.

Typically, there is little conflict at FCCP. Our church leadership works well together and the level of communication with the congregation is both consistent and transparent. In the recent past there were some issues that created both conflict, and in some cases fight or flight. The two polarizing issues were, Covid-19 restrictions and the political views of our previous Minister.

The Covid-19 restrictions were very similar to what we have seen on the national level where some people lived in fear of Covid-19 and the extreme also existed where those believed the church was too cautious. We were closed for in-person worship for quite a while and maintained a virtual mode. As we moved back to in-person we were cautious with masks, spacing, hand sanitizers, and we kept the windows open during service. It should be noted that we had blankets on each pew at this time. Since we have returned restrictions have been ratcheted back and masks and spacing is optional. We still have people who are uncomfortable returning in person.

FCCP is a church that supports civil rights of all. In our recent past, FCCP voted to support same-sex marriage and that vote was overwhelmingly in favor, although we have not officially

voted to be an open and affirming church. Our missions program has supported diversity and equity in our neighborhood, our region, and through the UCC, the world. We are a congregation with a wide range of perspectives and comfort levels with how our faith interacts with our public and civic lives and at times, especially during the last few years that lead to conflict and disagreements, especially with our former pastor, who may have overstepped lines.

Our Bridge Minister has been amazing and preaches the teachings of Jesus without political slant. Her message has been so well received by the congregation. Our hope is that the next Minister embodies an open and accepting message for our congregation, and challenges us to be the hands, mouth, ears, and heart of Jesus in this world, without political rhetoric.

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

As stated, FCCP has not experienced a lot of conflict over the years. For more than 40 years the church was led by a pastor and his wife. This was followed by an interim pastor who was a change agent and forced the congregation to be reflective in its practices. During this time there were issues of transition moving from the old to the new. As a congregation we had neighborhood meetings and general congregation meetings to discuss issues that included everything from creating bylaws to same-sex marriage. We would say that if there is conflict, we as a church talk it out. We are fortunate to have a solid system of governance and a unified focus on worship, Christian education, and missions,

	Church Membership	Weekly Worship Attendance	Children and Youth Participation	Adult Ed Participation
Pre-pandemic 2019	393	Average 109	26	Adult Ed is less consistent. We may run a book club or something similar, but there is no ongoing offering.
Current Year 2023	319	Average 49 (2022 data as we were mostly remote in 2021)	5	Covid-19 brought two consistent virtual options. The first was a Tuesday afternoon Bible Study with 8

				people and an evening offering with 3 people.
Income	Overall Budget	Income	Mission Giving	Reserves and Endowments
Pre-pandemic 2019	\$330,414	\$330,414	\$15,000	\$1,145,162
Current Year 2023	\$307,420	\$307,420	\$13,000	\$979,000

Compensation

Total Compensation Package (a combination of Salary, and Housing Allowance) Amount or Range \$80,000-\$85,000 commensurate with experience. The compensation package will be negotiated to determine the total percentage that would be allocated for salary and the percentage for housing.

Additional Benefits Package Includes:

- Sick time
- Annuity (14% of the salary and housing total i.e. \$11,200 on an \$80,000 salary package)
- Vacation time
- Health Insurance

Please explain briefly your process in discerning your compensation.

The Councils and Search Committee have worked to create a competitive compensation package that will hopefully garner interest from potential candidates so that we can identify the person who would be the best match to lead our church. As stated, we have a strong base both financially and spiritually. Our goal is to find the right candidate to continue to grow and feed our congregation.

Statement of Consent The covenantal relationship between a church and those called by that church to serve as Ministers 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.

____ *Mark Wood*, Search Chairperson ____

Signature of Search Committee Chairperson

_ May 1, 2023 _

Date