

United Church of Hardwick (UCofH)

Church Profile – Interim Pastor

What is our church like?

Earlier churches in Hardwick, the Baptist, Methodist, and Congregational, joined together to form the United Church of Hardwick in 1931, using the Congregational Church building. From that time until 2003, those denominations alternated leadership in our church but in the recent two decades, the United Church of Christ (Congregational) has seemed a better fit for us. We became an Open and Affirming Church (ONA) in 2014.

Our church was rebuilt in 1975 due to a devastating fire and consists now of three well-used floors; our sanctuary is on the top floor along with an office and gathering space, our kitchen, dining hall, classroom, and bathrooms on the second floor, and our “Angels Outfitters” thrift store is on the bottom floor where Sunday school classes once met. As much of our congregation ages, and as we seek to be a more accessible church, we are in the process of looking into building a lift/elevator. Designs were developed over a decade ago, so cost estimates need to be redone. We have set aside some funds for this project, but we realize there may be a need for a possible Capital Campaign to completely fund the project.

The United Church of Hardwick also provides a nearby unfurnished parsonage for our pastors.

Our small but active congregation is kept busy throughout the year. Besides our regular Sunday morning worship services, we also host weddings, funerals, baptisms, and special seasonal worship services from time to time. Our thrift store keeps volunteers busy offering good quality clothing at reasonable prices. We also provide free clothing too in times of special need.

Community dinners are offered on the 3rd and 4th Thursdays of the month, feeding 80 to 100 people at each meal, both in-person and take-out. The 3rd Thursday the meal is provided by a class from Hazen Union High School and people from the Center for an Agricultural Economy. The 4th Thursday is provided by the Church with help from local community members. A community dinner is

offered at Thanksgiving. Our annual auction is well attended and appreciated by the community. We also raise funds for a variety of missions; a Love Offering, One Great Hour of Sharing, UNICEF, and Heifer International are examples.

Like many other churches these days, and especially since Covid and distancing needs, our in-person attendance at worship is down although we do now offer internet access to our worship services via Zoom and Facebook livestream. As elsewhere offerings are down somewhat too although we are able to offer a 3/4 pastoral position plus parsonage for an interim/transitional pastor.

The community around our church:

Hardwick, VT is a small community of 3,500± people. Hardwick is part of the Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union made up of the Towns of Hardwick, Craftsbury, Greensboro, Stannard, Wolcott, and Woodbury. The two schools in Town are the Hardwick Elementary School and Hazen Union School, which is a middle and high school, serving all Towns in the Supervisory Union except for Craftsbury and Wolcott.

There are several active organizations in Town. A few of them are: The Center for an Agricultural Economy, whose goal is to transform our food system for social, economic, and ecological vitality. Neighbor to Neighbor is a grassroots group committed to assisting the community in times of need, most recently the July 2023 floods. The Hardwick Farmer's Market runs from May through October. AWARE is a group committed to assisting people in abusive situations and sponsors an annual Fall Craft Festival. Jeudevine Memorial Library was donated to the Town in 1896 and still provides residents with a variety of resources. The library is currently undergoing expansion. The Town Recreation Committee maintains the Hardwick Trails located on land owned by Hazen Union School and neighboring properties. The trails are used for walking, running, biking and cross-country skiing. During the winter the Rec Committee provides free skiing lessons and equipment loans. The Northeast Kingdom Arts provides upkeep of the Hardwick Town House and a variety of performances on stage. The Town House is the summer home of the Craftsbury Chamber Players.

Many organizations in town use our church building for their meetings and activities - AA and TOPS (Taking off Pound Sensibly) meet here weekly. Tae Kwan Do classes have used our building for testing events. Recently, Neighbor to Neighbor put on community chili dinners and use our kitchen to prepare and cook the food. Non-profits use the building for free while we charge a small fee to others who want to rent our space. Our members contribute a Love Offering to be used to assist local people in need and contribute to the Hardwick Food Shelf which serves many.

What do we need?

a. Transition from full to part-time? This is something we need more discussion on and input from members. What do members want? With the current status of our finances is a full-time pastor possible. Should we close the church? Should we quit operating as a church, but keep the other functions (thrift store, community dinners, community meeting space)? **Having an interim lead us through this process would be extremely beneficial.**

b. Financial assistance – We have talked for a number of years about doing a Capital Campaign, but don't really know how to go about this. One thing the church building really needs is a lift from the Sanctuary to the second floor, especially as this is an aging congregation. The only bathrooms are on the lower second floor. Would it be possible to install one on the sanctuary level?

c. Assistance with ways to grow the congregation.

d. Computer giving (Titheme)- helping us to set something up.

Compensation: Interim Paster (3/4 time, 30 hours/week)

For all services rendered by the interim pastor under this agreement, the United Church of Hardwick agrees to provide the following annual compensation:

~ \$30,000 Cash Salary (paid every two weeks)
Parsonage, unfurnished (heat, utilities, telephone landline)

Benefits according to the VT UCC Conference Guidelines

- *Pension Board Annuity (prorated)

- *Pension Board Term Life and Disability Insurance (prorated)

- *Health Insurance

- *Pastoral Ministry Expenses (Annual Conference attendance, study materials, mileage, etc.)