

Local Church Profile for Churches Seeking an **Interim Pastor**

Church Information

Full Name: United Church of Bernardston (UCB)
Address: 58 Church Street, Bernardston, MA 01337
Phone: 413-648-9306
Website: <http://www.unitedchurchofbernardston.org>

Additional Denominational Affiliations: United Methodist Church

UCC Conference: Southern New England
Association: Franklin Association
Area Conference Minister Name: Terry Yasuko Ogawa
ACM phone: 860-761-7192
ACM email: ogawaty@sneucc.org

Position Details

1. Describe the ministry position for which you are seeking a pastor.

The United Church of Bernardston (UCB) is a welcoming and accepting congregation located in Bernardston, a small town along the CT River and just off the last interstate 91 exit in Massachusetts as one heads north to Vermont. We seek a trained interim pastor who can guide us in reflecting on our rich past and discerning our vision for the future, assist us in calling a settled pastor, and facilitate worship and pastoral care needs.

Through guidance from the Holy Spirit, we anticipate the discernment process for UCB to involve creative and honest exploration to enhance and develop our spiritual growth and our ministry to those around us. Recent programming at UCB has included arts and music ministry, children and youth ministry, spiritual development; environmental and social justice work, stewardship and a variety of fundraising initiatives involving the wider community. In addition to helping in our discernment and search process, a UCB interim pastor would facilitate weekly worship with meaningful and relatable sermons

to our diverse congregation, offer pastoral care, and participate in life events of members and friends (funerals, weddings, baptisms).

We are a warm, caring congregation who genuinely enjoys each other's company and who shares generously of time, talent and treasure. UCB is composed of families from a wide rural area, and we have many ongoing partnerships with local community organizations. We are excited about what God has in store for us as we look to our future.

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

Competence and comfort with rendering and offering Pastoral Care. Visionary Guidance to a well-established, small community parish. Exploring our current Identity and expediting appropriate directions forward for, and with, our Congregation.

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

UCB, after careful discernment, anticipates the focus of an interim minister to be:

#1 LEADERSHIP: We need an interim pastor with aspects of leadership and models of leadership to help us prepare for a settled pastor. This Leadership should help us transition from established values and methods of leadership to more appropriate leadership for a small-town church as we move through the 21st century. We need leadership to discern a clear vision for our next 5 – 10 years. The task of providing leadership through creative, relevant, vibrant, Bible-based worship is important to UCB to support our faith and spiritual development.

#2 FUTURE: We need a clear vision of what God is calling UCB to be in the next decade. To move ahead with an eventual settled minister, we would like to work with an interim minister that is capable of facilitating our discernment of goals through dialog, education, and prayer. Our community has been concerned with the sustainability of our congregation, and within surrounding communities. We recognize that moving forward, in this and other regards, can be challenging. Assistance in this area would be a big plus in an Intentional Interim Minister. We need to discover what is possible to deepen our faith journey and be able to offer that journey to our community. We hope this interim minister can help the congregation set the groundwork for our settled pastor.

#3 HERITAGE: The heritage within the walls of UCB is very deep and wide. How this is incorporated into any models of this congregation moving forward will be challenging. Helping us let go of 'things as they have always been' will be an important part of the interim minister's role.

4. Position Scope: **X** Fulltime

5. Position Duration: **24 -30 Months**

Who We Are

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

We, the people of the United Church of Bernardston, seek to be a community of Christians who celebrate and are receptive to the voice of God. We celebrate the beauty and uniqueness of each expression of God's diverse family as well as our oneness in Christ. As we seek to live out our mission to live Christ's compassion and promote justice, healing and wholeness of life, we invite and welcome into our community persons of every gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, mental and physical ability/disability, age, race, nationality, economic and social status, faith background, marital standing, and family structure. We invite all to share in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, missions, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings and joys of our church family as we seek to grow together in faith and love.

2. Brief Church History:

In 1741 the soldiers (and their descendants) from the battle in 1675 (Falls Town Fight) were granted a tract of land by the General Court of Boston. This land was first known as "Fall Fight Township" which in 1762 became Bernardston. In 1823 Judge Job Goodale and 13 elders broke away from an earlier congregation and founded what is now known (after several name changes) as the United Church of Bernardston. Judge Goodale died later in 1823 after leaving the meeting house and land to the church. This building, enlarged, modernized, and beautified in many ways since then, is still in use.

The Goodale Memorial United Church joined with the Methodist Episcopal Society of Bernardston in 1912. Since then, the members have worshiped and worked together in harmony.

In 1957 when the United Church of Christ (UCC) was formed the Congregation voted to become a part of it. It was in 1965 that the members voted to change the name to the current name, United Church of Bernardston (UCB).

UCB has always ministered to the local community with many of its activities and services geared to promoting God's will in Bernardston and the surrounding area.

The deep roots of many families are instrumental in this ministry involvement. The members of this church provide many benefits to the public. For example, they have always been involved in town politics, many holding office. In addition, the church has supported town activities by offering the use of the facility. Community weddings, funerals, baptisms, and other celebrations of life events have often been centered around UCB regardless of church membership. UCB has also ministered to those needing social services providing pastoral care, occasional meals, Christmas gifts and other life enhancing gifts to demonstrate God's love for all.

3. 2-3 Significant Events:

Becoming an Open and Affirming/Welcoming Congregation in 2014; as a Green Congregation the installation and operation of a Solar Array on the roof of the Parish Hall (autumn 2023); approval of a Safe Church Policy Concerning Child Abuse by the Church Council in May, 2017.

4. Church Strengths:

1) Financial stability and willingness to work together for purposes of ongoing fundraising efforts (both for UCB, and to be supportive of other missions.) Such as: organizing and Hosting the Gas Engine Show since 1976 (This annual event brings together our broader church family from Bernardston and surrounding towns as well as our church family and has annually been the largest gathering in Franklin County. It has been proven to foster fellowship and bonding of our church community); participation in the Franklin County CROP walk (begun at UCB) since 1987; participation at Camp Mechuwana (Winthrop, ME) from before the turn of the century. 2) Supportive of Inclusive and Diverse beliefs and communities (such as participation in local Pride Parades and events.) 3) Openness to new approaches (both in the weekly Worship setting, as well as other aspects of our community) such as use of a live broadcast format of Sunday Service since early 2020. UCB continues this practice alongside of our weekly in-person worship.

5. Church Challenges:

To set the stage for the listing of strengths that follow, it should be noted upfront our willingness to be self-reflective during our time sharing the transitional work with our Interim Pastor. While one strength of our congregation is that many members generously give of their time, talent, and treasure, a challenge this creates is that there is not as much distributed leadership as there could be. Good leaders, even great leaders often unwittingly assume leadership to the point that other community members don't know how to suggest changes, get involved without stepping on toes, or otherwise navigate "the way things have been done". It is possible that some community members have stepped away because they are not sure how to voice their ideas for something new and different. Discerning the extent to which this is a challenge needs to be evaluated. We need help distributing leadership roles so that frustration does not erode the current leadership's passion for the church and its work. A few dedicated and experienced leaders getting burnt out and frustrated does not bode well for the sustainability of our small congregation which truly appreciates everyone's gifts.

6. Experience of Conflict:

1. Every church has conflict, some minor, some larger. On a scale of 1-5, where would you rank your church's level of conflict? **2**

(Based on this work by Speed Leas 1. Problem to solve 2. Disagreement 3. Contest 4. Fight or Flight 5. Intractable)

2. Please explain why you chose this level.

A lot of conflicts have been dealt with as "problems to solve" and have gone through the congregational protocols, various committees and groups like the Deacons. It's not clear how much pastoral oversight and massaging has helped resolve or cover up disagreements when they arise; the previous pastor was present in many committees and decision-making bodies but we do not have the benefit of an appropriate exit interview. Some conflicts fall more within level two "disagreement" complicated by a "mixing of personalities and issues" described in "Church Challenges" above.

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

Many pragmatic conflicts are openly discussed, directly addressed, and supported with the values of trust, honesty, integrity, and faith. Other conflicts may be ignored because people don't feel comfortable asking hard questions or challenging the way things have been operating for a long time.

Basic Church Statistics

Yearly average

	Church Membership	Weekly Worship Attendance	Children & Youth Participation	Adult Ed Participation
Pre-pandemic	175	55	10	10
Current year	130	40 + 15-25 online	6	8

	Income	Overall Budget	Mission Giving	Reserves & Endowment Principals **
Pre-pandemic	\$ 120,925	\$166,181	\$ 18,150	\$ 1,117,384
Current year	\$ 106,756	\$175,682	\$ 11,404	\$ 1,743,021

**** Endowments are targeted, thus limited as to how they can be accessed and used.**

Compensation

Total Compensation Package Amount: \$ 74,000.00; amount dependent upon experience

Package offered: **X** Total Package includes optional benefits to be negotiated.

Housing: **X Parsonage only**

Please explain briefly your process in discerning your compensation. **Conversations with the Property and Finance Committee on 16 December, 2023. We also engaged with the SNEUCC Compensation Guidelines before arriving at the above figure**

Church body responsible for hiring the Interim Pastor is: **Diaconate**

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Statement of Consent

The covenantal relationship between a church and those called by that church to serve as pastors and teachers and in other ministerial positions is strengthened when vital information is openly shared by covenantal partners. To that end, we attest that, to the best of our abilities, we have provided information in this document that accurately represents our church. We have not knowingly withheld any information that would be helpful to candidates. As the committee charged with the responsibility for identifying and recommending a suitable leader for the interim time for our church, we have been authorized to share the information herein with potential candidates.

We understand that a candidate may wish to secure further knowledge, information, and opinions about our church. We encourage a candidate to do so, recognizing that an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing and healthy relationships between calling bodies and persons seeking a ministry position.

Mark H. Gregory

Signature of Transition Team Chairperson

December 18, 2023

Date